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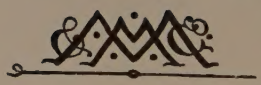
THE BLESSEDNESS

OF

THE DEAD IN CHRIST



THE BLESSEDNESS

OF

THE DEAD IN CHRIST

And other Sermons

BY THE LATE

WILLIAM MATURIN, D.D.

PERPETUAL CURATE OF ALL SAINTS, GRANGEGORMAN, DUBLIN

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

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1888

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I

DEATH THE ONLY CERTAINTY

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—GEN. iii. 19.

IT is the sentence which God pronounced upon Adam at the fall, which has been rigorously enforced upon all his posterity from that day, and from which not even redemption itself can exempt us. It is a sentence which must be carried out upon you and upon me. And yet how few of us there are who think of it to any real purpose! Men die daily. The world pays its tribute of conventional decorum. It utters its hollow commonplaces about the person, or about the event, and then both are alike forgotten. People think of their own death, too, in its earthly aspect. They arrange their affairs; they make their wills; they give directions about their funeral; they settle where their remains are to be laid; they talk with composure of what is to be done here when they and the world have parted for ever. But where are those who enter into their closet,

and when they have shut the door, prostrate themselves before God, and from the very depths of an awakened soul say: "Lord, Thou hast said, and I believe, that I am dust, and that I must return to dust. I accept the sentence. Lord, make me to know mine end. So teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom"?

This is the view of death to which I propose to draw your thoughts this evening. I wish to place it before you in the most direct, personal, and practical way, as if it concerned yourself alone. And first, then, consider the certainty of death—of your own death. Death is the only certainty. Not only is it the end of everything here for each of us, but it is the only thing here that we can be perfectly sure of. In what an unspeakably serious and solemn light does this single fact place our entire position in the present world! There is but one thing absolutely certain to us in this life, and that one thing is that we must leave it. You cannot count upon anything else—not a single thing. You do not know how long you have to live; you cannot tell of what sort your life will be, whether it will be pleasant or painful, prosperous or afflicted; you cannot call anything in this world your own, or promise yourself the possession of it even for a single hour; you may lose pro-

perty, employment, health, friends, reputation, all that makes this life worth having. God may call you to great suffering before you die, or, on the other hand, God may leave you these blessings untouched. He may lead you through ways dark and difficult, and hedge your path about with thorns ; or He may lead you gently on, smoothing the road before you to the end ; you cannot tell. Some begin with prosperity and end in sorrow ; some have their troubles at first, and at the last peace, like a sweet and tranquil sunset after a day of storm. One thing alone you do know about your own future here, but one thing—that you must die. Everything else from this hour to your last hour is shrouded in uncertainty. But death is certain. It is the last thing, whether few or many things come between ; that one thing that must come. We may escape all else, but we cannot escape this. It stands at the end of the road, and there is no turning aside from it. Or rather all roads centre here ; all the thoroughfares of life pour their innumerable passengers upon this one point, where they are all engulfed.

And if this be really the case—and we know that it is—if every day that passes over our heads is only bringing us nearer and nearer to death in actual approach, ought not every day to bring our hearts and minds nearer to it in habitual thought

and preparation? Is it wise for us to shut our eyes to what is actually before us? Is it more than what natural reason, nay, self-interest, requires of us, that we should steadily contemplate the end to which we are thus steadily and inevitably approaching? I put it on the lowest ground, which all at any rate can appreciate; if we could by any possibility escape death, or obtain an indefinite postponement of it, or even learn the moment when it would summon us, then indeed the case would be different. But we know we cannot. And if we cannot escape it, then surely we ought to look at it and confront it. Children shut their eyes lest they should see what they are afraid of. But whatever is to be seen is there, whether they shut their eyes or keep them open. Beware of being like a child and shutting your eyes to death, forgetting it, taking for granted that it is far off, that it will send you warning, that you will have time enough to think of it when you are less busy than now, or when you are old, or when you are sick, or, in short, when a convenient time comes. Beware of this. You may never be less busy than you are now; you may never live to be old; you may have no sickness before you die; you may never find any time as convenient as the present; you may be called away suddenly and have no notice. Think

of that fool in the Gospel who, when he got a sudden accession of abundance, began to puzzle his brain as to what he should do with all the produce of his ground; who laid out plans for years of life to come; who was to pull down, and to build up again, and when all was done then to take his ease—to eat, drink, and be merry. This was his scheme of life as he drew it up for himself, and it was complete after the standard of the world; first work, and then enjoyment. He never brought death into his calculation; never thought of dying at all. But God said to him, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." *This* night—the very night when he was laying out an entire course of life for himself on earth,—that very night he died. So it is with men every day—cut off in the midst of incompleted works or half-framed projects. So it may be with you. God may call you away at any moment, any day or any night, without a single note of warning, or a single instant to make preparation, if you forget or turn away your thoughts from it now.

Beware, therefore, of doing this. Look at death as what is coming to you, and must come. When you rise in the morning, think of it. Say to yourself, "I must die; I may die to-day, but I must die some day, and now it is nearer than it was yesterday." When you are about your busi-

ness, recall yourself from the stir and distraction of the world, calm yourself down, bring your thoughts and desires into order, by remembering that you must die. When the day ends, remember that your day will end ; when you lie down at night, remember that you must even so lie down in your grave. Try to accustom yourself to this thought at all times. It is not pleasant or attractive, but it is true. In the ancient triumphs, when all the pomp and glory of the world was accumulated to do homage to the victor, a slave stood behind him to remind him that he was mortal, that he must die. That slave was his only friend—the only one who told him the truth among the applauding multitudes that surrounded him. So it is with us. Of all the thoughts that any of us can have about this present world, the truest, the wisest, the most practical is the thought that we must leave it—that we are dust and must return to dust. "Whatsoever thou takest in hand," says the writer of *Ecclesiasticus*, "remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss."

2. And think, again, of what death itself,—this one great certainty that awaits us all,—think of what it is. Think of it, I repeat, as if you alone were concerned in the subject, as if you were the only one here that must die. Death comes to each man and separates him finally from the present

world ; it is, in fact, the end of the world to him as completely as if the world itself were to perish. When a man dies, in that moment he has done with the world as much as if he had never had anything to do with it. The man that died yesterday has no more to do with the world now than the child that is unborn. When you die the world will be at an end for you. Now consider what this really means. We have grown up in this world from the dawn of consciousness. We have grown into it, and it has grown into us. We have taken root in it, casting some of the strongest and tenderest fibres of our nature deep into its soil; and it has taken root in us, insinuating and entwining itself by every refinement and subtlety of tie, among and around our thoughts and affections. Our whole life and history is thus associated with this world, and blended with its concerns ; all we have ever thought, felt, or done, everything good or bad in us, has taken place, been done or developed, in this world. Here are our families, our friends, our occupations ; here have been our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, our struggles, successes, failures, disappointments. This world has been the scene of all ; has had some share, perhaps, more or less in all. And when we die we must have done with it at once and for ever. Now we are in this world not only as its inhabitants,

but as forming part of it ourselves; then we shall stand outside of it, and look at it as strangers.

But what a thought is this to take home to our hearts! What a lesson does it teach as to the way in which we should view everything, measure everything, value everything in the present world! I am not now speaking of the end of the world as regards itself—of the coming of the Day of God when the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up—but of the end of it as regards you. And that end is just as near and as certain as the time of your own death. In the very moment in which you die, this world, full of it as you may be now, or the moment before, will be no more to you than if it had never existed. Such is its real value. Think well of it, and try to apply the test in your daily life. If you are tempted to covet any earthly distinctions or advantages, or to pride yourself on their possession if you have them, then remember that the only certainty about them is the certainty of having to part from them. If you are beset by the trials of life, perplexed, cast down, overwhelmed by its cares and difficulties, think of how short a time, at the longest, you will have to struggle with them; how insignificant they will appear to you when you die. If the world's service now seems pleasant, and the service of

your Saviour hard and distasteful, O think, I beseech you, of how utterly poor and miserable the one will appear, how light and glorious the other, when seen, as you will soon see them, from the side of Eternity. When you look at the clouds at sunset the whole sky is ablaze with light and colour, and glitters with gold and jewels; the sun sinks, and in a moment the vision of glory is gone, and nothing remains but a dull vapour which a breath of wind dissipates. So are the best things of this world, a momentary pageant; so are its worst, a passing vapour. Both alike fleeting; both gone in a moment.

3. And not only will death separate us finally from this world, not only will it be the end of this world so far as we ourselves have anything to do with it, but it will be the end of that part of our nature by which we are bound to the world, and hold intercourse with it. Death will come to us, each one, individually and intimately; it will sunder the soul from the body; it will bring the body to an end, dissolve and destroy it, as far as it can. Unto dust thou shalt return. Here is another of its certainties. Death will come upon you some day; it will seize upon you; it will overmaster you with resistless force, and compel you to yield your body into its hands. "What is this great death," exclaimed the half-

savage Clovis when he was dying, "that thus pulls down the might of the strongest kings?" The strength of the giant then is the helplessness of the babe. As surely as you are living in that body of yours now, so surely must you, in a given time, known to God, leave it, and then you must live out of it. This is what is waiting for us all. This body is our channel of communication with the outer world. All its avenues lie open; we go to the world, and the world comes to us, through the body. Think of what it will be to quit it; to live without it; to go on living without it till the resurrection; to see it lie there, no longer our own, no longer any part of ourselves; to look upon what is now this visible person of ours, and to see that it is no more our own person, that we have nothing to do with it now. To see our body lie silent, helpless, motionless; to know it; to contemplate it; to be able to say: "That is what I was—my form, my face—that is all that remains of me upon earth. The world and I have now looked our last upon each other; and this that is left of me will soon return to dust and vanish."

If you knew for a certainty that in a given time, say in another year, you must lose the use of your limbs, or your sight, or your hearing, would you not try to do everything that it was

possible for you to do in the interval, to fit yourself for living without them? If you knew that you were to be blind for the rest of your life, or lame, or deaf, would you not give all your interest and attention to discover a substitute for the powers of which you were to be deprived? Would it not be your daily study to endeavour to qualify yourself for that new condition? Wonderful indeed is the ingenuity of man in devising remedies for the failure of nature in what concerns the life of the body. But what are you doing, or are you doing anything to prepare yourself for living, not without sight, or hearing, or any single sense, but without the body itself and all its powers, as you will have to do when you die? and that might be not in a year, but in another day. Are you trying, in any real and genuine way, with your Saviour's help, to get the better of the body, its lusts and appetites, to subdue it, to free yourself from it, to live above it here? Are you trying to live a sober, chaste, temperate, pure, self-denying life, so that when you are deprived of this body in which you are living now, you may be able to live on without it, having disciplined and overcome it here on earth, and brought it into subjection to your higher nature? Is this what you are trying with God's grace to do: or are you one of those who are

under the dominion of this perishing body,—dependent on it for your enjoyment, a slave to its wants, its appetites, its desires? Do you surround yourself as far as your circumstances will permit with your comforts, your indulgences, your luxuries; everything that can contribute to make your life smooth, easy, and pleasant,—pampering your appetites, pleasing your senses, gratifying your taste, your vanity, your ostentation; finding your daily enjoyment in these enjoyments of the body, or of what belongs to the body, and knowing little or no limit except inclination and the power of indulging it? Mind I am not speaking so much of bodily vices,—gluttony, intemperance, impurity,—whatever the world calls excess,—not so much of these as of an ordinary worldly life in these days of luxury at once exorbitant and diffused, so as to come within the reach of all ranks, when there is little or no self-denial, and the body and its demands rule.

Is this your life, or anything like it? Then look again at what is before you,—what alone is certain,—what may be upon you sooner than you can have any conception. Look at your body as dead. It will be so. Stand aside for a moment and survey it. There it lies. You have left it. What can you do for it now, or what can it do for you? Oh, you did a great deal for it once, a

great deal to please and indulge it! What sums of money you laid out upon it if you were rich, and if you were poor, how you starved yourself in better things, and defrauded your family, in order to feed its insatiable cravings! What a world of good you might have done with all that you spent upon that poor helpless body which is nothing to you now! And how has it requited you; what fruit have you for all you have done? They lift it up; they carry it forth; they lay it in the ground. It is covered up from the eyes of men, for they dare not look at it farther—who would dare to look? This is the end of the body, as far as men see it,—of all its eating and drinking, and lying softly, and dressing finely, and lodging luxuriously. What terrible irony upon all the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same and the carnal desires of the flesh! What a poor, cold, dark, narrow house to lie down alone in at last!

I said that none would dare to look farther. I have read of one whose lot it was to look farther than this, and such was the effect of the sight that it converted him. Let us for a moment try to follow him. The incident is a touching one. When Charles V. was once holding great court at Toledo, where all the nobles of Spain were assembled, in the midst of all the splendours and

festivities of the occasion, his wife died. The Empress Isabella was a very beautiful woman, very modest and gracious, and everybody loved her, so that her sudden death spread a gloom over the whole court. But none felt it more than a young nobleman of her household, Francis Borgia, a favourite with the Empress, and married to one of the ladies who waited on her. In compliance with the custom of the Spanish monarchy, it was necessary that the body of the Empress should be buried at Granada, in the sepulchre of the kings; and to him it was given in charge to escort her remains to their last earthly resting-place. On reaching Granada a final task awaited him. The body of the Empress must be identified in consigning it to the guardians of the royal sepulchre. The coffin was therefore opened; the face of the dead lady was uncovered, but no one could recognise her; and so dreadful was the spectacle that revealed itself that the companions of Borgia fled in horror from the spot. He alone remained; but he could only swear to the fidelity with which he had discharged his mournful trust, not to the identity of that ruined form. But what he then saw struck home to his inmost soul. In that one moment his eyes were opened to the realities of life and death; he saw before him the end of all earthly glory and beauty; he saw that

God alone abides, and he resolved from thenceforth to devote himself wholly to God's service. So great was the change wrought that it is said his friends would not have known him.

Think of this, men, when you are tempted to treat your body with delicacy and overcare, if not worse, making provision for the flesh and the lusts thereof; think of it, women, when you dress yourselves out in the garments of vanity, when you comply with all the wanton and costly caprices of fashion, when you spend your time, your thoughts, your money on adorning those frail bodies so soon to end thus. Ah, think of Borgia as he stood beside all that was left on earth of his beautiful mistress. Are those the eyes that once drew all eyes towards them? Is that the face, the form whose loveliness and grace delighted all beholders? Is that indeed she to whose presence it was an honour and a joy to be admitted, and now the poorest menial turns from it shuddering? What profit is there in my life when I go down to the pit?

4. And finally. Death will not only separate us from the body, and be the destruction of this body in its present state; it will be the end of our whole course of probation. In this world we are in a state of probation for another, and we shall continue in that state as long as we live.

Our future condition is not yet absolutely determined, and will not be as long as we are here. When you die it will be decided at once and for ever. Up to the last moment of life your probation will continue ; at the last moment it will end. What a thought for each of us ! The last moment will be the crisis of our being ; it will declare who are saints and who are rejected. The true saint will triumph through his Saviour's grace, but he must pass the ordeal and encounter the struggle. This, then, is the moment to prepare for, all our lives. You know that in a battle the whole issue sometimes hinges upon a single point. The hosts on both sides at length precipitate themselves upon that one point. The post is held and seized, taken and retaken, and the great waves of fight surge, swell, and break around it, till at length amid the thunder and the smoke a single flag is seen to struggle upwards, declaring the side of victory. So is it with the last conflict, the last great struggle. You will be there. There will be the poor body from which you are departing. Satan will be there to watch and tempt you if he can. The angels of God will be there, as they were with Lazarus, to guard you from him. But Christ your Saviour will be there too to succour and protect you if you are His. Christ who endured the agony for you will be there to

strengthen you in your agony. Christ who suffered upon the cross for you will be there, to sustain you by the power of His cross in your mortal suffering. Christ who died for you will be there to preserve your soul's life. Yea, He will be there to feed you with immortal food, even the food of His own most precious body and blood, the bread and the wine of life, that you may pass safe through the last struggle, and win the victory. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

O Lord Jesu Christ, who for us hast entered within the veil and standest at the right hand of God to intercede for us, help us who stand here without; help us now, and in the hour of death, that we may not at the last hour, through any temptation of the devil, or any weakness of the flesh, or any pains of death, fall from Thee!

II

THE DESIRE TO DEPART

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."—PHIL. i. 23.

I WAS lately reading a religious biography, in which the following circumstance is mentioned incidentally. A young girl who was dangerously ill happened to overhear the doctors, as they were consulting about her state, say among themselves that there was no hope of her recovery. As soon as she heard the news she burst into tears of joy at the prospect of her departure.

I mention this circumstance, not as an uncommon one in the case of those who have led a really consistent life among Christians, but as one of those instances which exhibit distinctly and in completeness the supernatural fruits of the Christian religion. Our religion is supernatural. It is based on miracle, and, to reiterate a much assailed word, it is replete with miracle. I do not mean that miracles have been once for all wrought

for its establishment and have now ceased, but that they continue still, that they belong inseparably to the Christian system, and are taking place among us every day,—miracles as real, though dealing with different materials, as those which were wrought openly by our Lord and His apostles. For what is a miracle? Is it not a divine interposition—the will of God causing a change in the creature of God? And is that less of a miracle which is wrought upon the living soul of man than that which deals with mere unconscious matter? or rather, is not the work of God upon our spiritual nature—the gift of a new life, the conversion of the heart, the revolution in its affections—a more signal manifestation of His presence as dealing with elements at once nobler in themselves, and possessed of a more mysterious power of resistance, than when He gave sight to the blind or fed the multitudes in the wilderness? You can subdue matter by force, but not our marvellous will.

It is thus, I say, that our religion is supernatural. God is really dealing with us Christians every day; we are each one of us as much the subjects of His care, of that gracious personal treatment, as if we were alone in His presence. But this supernatural character of which I speak is, for the most part, hidden. The operations of

divine grace are secret. They are real, wonderful; but they cannot be traced or distinguished. The signs are there, but even the signs serve to hide them. And so, too, the actions produced by God's grace, sometimes from their very nature as being internal acts, or as choosing obscurity, sometimes because they are marred through the imperfection of the human agent, are not known. Sometimes, however, it is otherwise. We do witness acts of love, of faith, of self-sacrifice, of patience, of forgiveness, of unchanging gentleness and sweetness, that show then and there, at the very time when they are done, the present power of God, and the image of Christ upon them by which they are distinguished from all that man does or can do, which is sometimes fair and noble in its human way. There are things said or done, or perhaps left unsaid or undone, as some of ourselves may have witnessed, which give present proof of the spirit of Christ moving, or, as it may be, restraining the soul of His servant.

And it is in this way that I have referred to the little incident which I mentioned just now. It possesses entirely this supernatural character. This girl, with all her young life fresh and strong within her, with all the brightness and attractions of an untried world around her, was not shocked or alarmed at the thought of dying so abruptly

brought before her; had not merely made up her mind so as to be content to die if it was God's will, but was in that frame and temper of soul, that she actually wept for joy on hearing by chance that her summons had come. And this came quite naturally and without any excitement, anything that could remove the feeling out of the range of what is perfectly intelligible. It was as if the pent-up fountain of all her dear and habitual longings had been suddenly touched, and burst forth spontaneously in irrepressible tears of joy, just as it would be in the case of any of ourselves who was to hear in a single moment that all his best and happiest hopes were on the point of being fully realised.

I say, then, that this state of mind is supernatural. And we shall see more clearly that it is so, if we consider in the first instance how it is that the same announcement is commonly received; how people regard the approach of death when it is for the first time distinctly brought home to them. And here I will confine myself entirely to the case of those who would be considered as in some real sense prepared to die. It would be out of place now to speak of bad Christians, such as have led a sinful, or mere worldly, or self-deceiving life, who have neglected religion or made a false profession of it, and never tried to prepare for

death. To those who are in such a state, its sudden approach is, or ought to be, simply appalling. And it would be well for them indeed if they did begin to fear in time, that they might escape what they have too good reason for fearing. I speak now of the common run of what are called religious people, and who have at any rate a Christian hope in their death. And with what feelings is it that such as these hear for the first time and unexpectedly that death is coming? I suppose the commonest feeling of all at such a time is that to which King Hezekiah gave utterance when he received a similar summons. Hezekiah was a good man, one who had feared and served God, and yet, when he was sick, and the prophet Isaiah was sent to him with the message, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live; he turned his face to the wall, and prayed, saying, I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." *He wept sore.* This is but natural. The first feeling with most people is that of sorrow.

Ah, the parting with life and all that life contains—so many things pleasant, so many very dear that we must leave for ever, or not meet again till we meet before God! A man is sick, and he

thinks that he will get over it, for he has been sick before and recovered. He may have had graver thoughts about himself and his present condition, but still scarcely what are called alarming thoughts; and then he is told all at once and on a sudden that he is going to die! and he sees from the way in which he is told it, that there is no hope, as men say. The gulf is opened that divides him from all the living world. What a change is this; coming in the midst of all his earthly thoughts and associations and telling him that he must go; rudely breaking before his eyes every tie that binds him here, as a thread is broken! What a shock! To leave his employments, his interests, his friends, his home; and this at a moment's notice, as it now seems. It is a great trial. Yes, that is the proper word for it: a trial of what he *is;* of what is *in* him; where his affections are. It tries him to the very core, bringing to the surface what has formed and lain within, and was unknown even to himself. And a good man comes out of the trial, yet not without suffering and marks of the struggle.

Men die on a field of battle with their blood warm or their minds preoccupied, or they are nerved to meet death by the circumstances of its approach, and then it is not of death itself that they are thinking. But to be suddenly told in

the stillness of a sick room, without any of those adventitious distractions or supports,—to be told, perhaps alone, or with those you love near at hand, but in either case with a sense of the most utter helplessness, that death is coming; this, I say, tries what a man is, and where his heart and thoughts are really fixed, and if they are too earthly—and this, alas, is the commonest case even with those who are considered good people—what can follow but a great burst of grief, as it was with him who, when he was told that he must die and not live, turned his face to the wall, and wept sore.

Another way in which the approach of death presents itself to the minds of many people is simply in the light of a release. There are some who, from mere natural causes, have lost their love of the world. Such is the case with the great body of the afflicted. Those who have had many losses or disappointments in life, those who have had much sorrow, or bodily suffering, or long continued illness, often become gradually accustomed to look forward to death as a final deliverance from all; and when they are told of its approach at last, they are not grieved or terrified, but receive the tidings with acquiescence as announcing to them rest from their troubles. They have ceased to enjoy the world, or to expect anything from it;

they are exhausted by physical suffering, and long for it all to come to an end ; and they think that death will put an end to it. This feeling is expressed in the words of Job, when, in reference to the state of the departed, he says that "there the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." This is what they want ; to get rest—not to be troubled any more—and this is what they expect to find in death. They are not without a hope which the Christian religion supplies, but it is a hope derived rather from a general belief in the truth of Christianity than from any personal appropriation of that truth to themselves. They believe that our Lord has procured salvation for all, and they trust in His mercy to save them when they die, but they have not carefully considered the nature of that salvation, or sought to realise for themselves the state into which they will pass when they leave the present life. What is uppermost in their minds is the thought of release—escape from present evils ; and coupled with this, but below it, a general hope of acceptance through God's mercy and our Lord's merits, but without any distinct conception of what acceptance means beyond this, that they expect to be safe hereafter. They long, in fact, for release in itself as the chief good in death, rather than for what release leads to ; and if they part from this

world without sorrow, they are also without joy at the prospect of the world they are approaching.

Another feeling with which a numerous class meet death is the feeling of resignation. These are not sorry to die, in the sense at least in which I have spoken just now; their sorrow has been chastened and quelled; they do not regard death as a release, for they are not tired or disgusted with the present life, and would be glad to live longer if it was God's will, but they are resigned to His will. They are content that He should dispose of them as He sees good, and are satisfied to die if it is His pleasure to take them. They have made up their minds—and to do this implies struggle and difficulty, the love of life and what life holds dear to be resisted and overcome—they have made up their minds for whatever God is pleased to do with them. Now this resignation in the prospect of death, though far beyond the mere wish for release, and in itself the fruit of genuine religious affections, does not necessarily come up to the height of Christian hope; and for this reason. There is no definite expectation present to the mind. There is submission to God and trust in Him; there is the general persuasion that God will do what is best, and a readiness to follow Him in the dark,—a readiness even like that of Abraham when God said to him,

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." And he went at God's command, not knowing whither he went. And this is faith. But there is no strong desire; no longing after a blessedness believed and known and embraced; and this is the hope which Christianity bestows.

These three then are the commonest ways in which death is regarded, when its approach is first brought home, as inevitable, to the minds of those who would be considered as good people. There is either at first a great sorrow, or a quiet acquiescence in the thought of coming release, or resignation to the will of God. These feelings—especially the last of them—are not of course inconsistent with the presence of Christian hope, but they are independent of it; they do not suggest it; they can exist without it; and in proportion as they predominate, they exclude it altogether. And these feelings, as I have already intimated, are strictly natural. Sorrow at the thought of dying—of leaving abruptly all we know, and going as suddenly to what is unknown—is natural to those who have many ties and occupations in this life, and are in full possession of all their powers of acting and enjoying. Mere life, to such as are in health of body and mind, the sense of life and strength in ourselves, the sense of life and beauty

all about us, is in itself absolute enjoyment, and makes the evils that are pressing everywhere to be forgotten or underrated at the moment,—and to leave all this is bitter to our nature. And again,—to the heart-sick and weary, who have lost all they care for here, and worse, lost the power at once of caring and of surmounting loss, it is natural to take a sort of gloomy consolation in the thought of entire release. And even submission to God's will, which is the other and only really religious feeling of the three, is not beyond those ordinary influences of divine grace which are common to all men. These feelings then are all natural; and if there are any other states of mind connected with the prospect of death besides that which I am going to refer to, they also are natural; that is, they can be accounted for by what is to be found in the experience of us all, and do not require anything higher to explain them.

And now to recur to the instance with which I began. There is one condition of mind in the sudden view of death entirely different in its character from all others, and not to be explained by any common principle of our nature. It is the state of mind expressed by St. Paul in the text, when he says, "Having a desire to depart;" it is the state of mind disclosed by the girl who wept for joy when she heard that she was going to die;

it is summed up in this one word—Desire. The desire to die,—not for the sake of release, not as an escape from any suffering here, but as bringing us to what we long for—this desire is peculiar to the Christian character ; and it is, as I said, supernatural. There are no materials upon earth out of which to frame it. We cannot account for its production without having recourse at once to another and a higher state.

For consider yourself what it is and what it means. It is this. It is the deliberate desire of a human being, one in every way like ourselves, to leave this world, and to leave it at any moment; and this desire is quite irrespective of his condition or circumstances here. He may be young or old, rich or poor, sick or in health, in trouble or in the plenitude of all power to enjoy the world and whatever the world can give ; and yet he desires to go and to leave all. The desire may vary in its intensity : it may be the timid yet hopeful feeling which says, I should wish to go if I could only think I was fit to go—if I might hope ; or it may be the passionate longing of the soul uttering itself in tears ; or it may be the calm, patient, but ceaseless aspiration of the mature saint, as in the apostle ; but in all and every case it is equally a genuine and true desire, starting at once to the voice that calls it, and waiting only for the call.

This is what the desire is: a real desire, an abiding desire, a strong overmastering desire; strong enough to conquer the love of life, the love of this world and everything in it, and sweeping the soul with it towards its goal.

And now—what does the desire mean? What is it that the Christian thus desires? What filled the heart of that girl with transport at the thought of death? What was the object before her? I answer in a single word—Home. She heard at last that she was going home, and she could not contain herself for joy. Now we can all to a certain extent understand this—the love of home—though we may not be able to comprehend the higher application of it to a home out of this present life. This love of home is one of the strongest feelings of our nature, the parent of the love of country, and the ground of much of our attachment to this whole visible world. Have you ever known what it is to live in a foreign country or among strangers, and to watch the time approaching that is to bring you home again? To reckon the days as they pass; to lie down at night with the thought that morning will bring you nearer; to number the miles on your journey; to watch one familiar object after another starting into view as you hasten on your way; to see at length the very tokens of home; something perhaps quite common

and unattractive in itself, but inexpressibly dear to you for all the associations bound up with it? Do you know what it is to have some spot on earth that contains everything you care for in the past and in the present, and where you rest as far as earth can give any rest? But why need I multiply questions as to your knowledge of that charm and spell to which none are insensible, and which has even given occasion to a special malady in our nature named from it—home-sickness? Even the poorest home, and the most ordinary object associated with it, acquire an influence capable of subduing the rudest natures, and which none can resist. When the bodyguard of the French kings was composed of Swiss mercenaries, it was found necessary to prohibit their national music owing to its overpowering effect upon them. The sound of their native song heard in the plains of France or the narrow streets of its towns recalled to them their own homes among the mountains, and they pined away and became useless. This is what we mean by home here; the little tent that we set up for ourselves to-day and strike to-morrow, and that is never seen again by any, and never forgotten perhaps by those who reared it. And the substance of this idea of home, what is it but the living presence that belongs to it? This is its life and light to us, in fact or in memory. And

now if this be the case with our earthly home, poor and passing at best, you can in some measure understand what must be the feeling of those who are looking to a lasting home ; a home of endless peace, of perfect beauty ; a home where one, even Christ Himself, is the light and joy of all. Why has God given us this love of home? I suppose it is because there is in His creation a home to answer it, a better country, a city that hath foundations, a Father's house with its many mansions. What home and the whole world with all its fascinations are to the children of the world, such, but in an inconceivably higher degree, is the heavenly home and country to the children of Christ. And if you urge that they, at any rate, have never seen this home ; I answer that they have. They have seen it supernaturally. They have seen it, not with their bodily eyes, but reflected in the Word of God. They have seen it as Moses saw Canaan from the top of Pisgah, but by a clearer because an inward vision. They have seen it : and those who have seen it once have no eyes ever after for any other and lesser sight. You know the merchantman who found the pearl of great price sold all that he had to buy it. The infidel historian sneers at what is told of St. Bernard, who, at the close of a day's journey along the shores of the lake of Geneva, hearing his monks as they

sat at supper dilate with rapture on the beauties through which they had passed, asked in surprise of what beauties they were speaking. He had been so absorbed in inward meditation during the entire journey as to be insensible to everything around him. Whether this story is true or not, it possesses at any rate a deep significance. All the glory and beauty of this world are, in a sense, unseen by those who have once looked on the beauty of the heavenly home. They walk on secure. And when told at last that they are to go, their hearts leap up within them at the thought, with an ecstasy of which all the joys of the exile returning to the land and home of his birth and love are but faint echoes.

III

THE DEPARTURE

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."—PHIL. i. 23.

IN recurring once more to this text I propose to confine what I have to say, on the present occasion, to the subject of one word—the word *depart*. I now propose to speak of departure itself—that is, of death; what it is and what we know about it; of death alone, not of what goes before or what follows it. And in doing so I shall confine what I have to say entirely to what applies to the case of true Christians,—of those who in their measure and degree partake of the same character as the apostle, and may, therefore, in the same degree adopt his words for themselves. It is of the departure of such as these that I propose now to speak, not of any others, unless indeed so far as there are general circumstances in death which are necessarily common to all.

And first: take the word itself—depart—in its

obvious meaning. It is a remarkable word in every way as applied to death, and lifts us at once a vast stage from the sphere of nature to the sphere of revelation. Mere reason knows nothing of such a word as this; it tells us very little with certainty about death, and gives us little help to conjecture. All it tells us on the subject amounts to this: that when any one dies, that part of their nature by which we knew them always—their form, their features, the hands with which they touched us, the eyes with which they looked at us, the voice which we heard when they spoke to us—all comes to an end. The whole form that we knew soon decays and turns to dust. But what that other part of their nature was which dwelt in the body—for even reason asserts that something far higher than the body itself dwelt there—what has taken place in their separation, where and how that higher element or existence is gone,—on these points it can give us no certain information. All it knows is, that there was a presence just now which was life; that the body itself was loved for the sake of that living presence which revealed itself through every part as a light shining through a transparent vase; that the light is extinguished, the presence gone, the vessel darkened, marred, and broken.

This is all that unaided nature can tell us

about death. But now look at the word which St. Paul uses, and see the immeasurable difference. Having a desire to depart—literally, to set sail. Now consider what this expression implies. First, St. Paul speaks of himself as departing, and therefore he distinguishes himself altogether from the body which he desired to leave. He, the individual apostle, desired to depart, and so it was possible for him to depart, to separate from the body, and yet to be himself, to remain the same person still. Not as if he was about to undergo any essential change in any part of his consciousness, but that the same man who was upon earth would be with Christ when he left the earth. This is well worth observing. Who was it that desired to depart? The Apostle Paul. What was it that would depart? The same apostle himself; not the soul of St. Paul, if we take the word soul to represent one part only of his nature which could be separated from himself, as the body could be separated, but himself, and the soul as being himself. From what was he to depart? From the body. It follows then that our souls are our real selves, in such a sense as that this individuality of ours—this consciousness by which we recognise our own identity, this mysterious personality expressed by the word "I"—belongs altogether to the soul, while the body is no more than its temporary abode,

from which it can remove at once without undergoing any change which affects its true individual being. Just as a man may lose hand or foot, sight or hearing, any one or more of his bodily members, or of his senses, while here on earth, and still be, and feel himself to be, the very same man that he was before when he had them—feel that he himself in his true and complete being is not affected by the loss—so a man may be divested of the entire body itself, and be in all essential respects the same living being that he was while in the body. This, I say, is plainly taught in the text, that in death it is the person, the true and living person, not a mutilated fragment of ourselves, who departs from the body, and so the soul, which is what then departs, is the living person which we ourselves are.

And see what follows from this fact. This present world is commonly regarded even by religious people as the scene of all active life; death is looked upon as what puts a stop to this in the case of each one of us, and our state thenceforth viewed as something shadowy and unsubstantial, more like a dream than the condition of a living being. Those who are alive are those who are still upon earth; those who die have ceased to live in that vivid active sense, that exercise of all the living powers of the soul which we apprehend

here and in which our life consists. But all this is reversed by the disclosure made in St. Paul's words. According to the apostle, our souls are ourselves, and in them we are. It is in the soul that our personality resides, which feels, thinks, resolves, acts, so that all our life even here on earth is the life of the soul. The body has no life but what it derives from its presence. When we die this living being which constitutes ourselves departs from the body, and death consists in the body being so abandoned by its life. But is that life less living because it thus leaves its earthly abode? Is the soul, which is the life of the body, less alive, less quick and active in all its faculties and powers, because it separates from the body to which itself gave all the life it had? Did St. Paul mean that in departing, in the act of departure, he himself who departed lost any of his life, or suffered diminution of any of those powers of which he is conscious here? Assuredly not. On the contrary, to depart is to become more alive, so to speak, than we can be while in this world, and for this reason—we shall then be freed altogether from the sinful and mortal body which now presses down the soul, and distracts it in all its efforts to rise to higher things. The state at the resurrection will be wholly different; the soul will then be reunited to a body purified, restored, and

made fit to be its companion and helper. But now to leave the body is to get rid of that which clogs the soul, which is the great source of temptation, and from which we can be secure only as long as we bring it under and keep it in subjection. And therefore in this view of it alone, to depart is the present act of entering into a freer, better, higher life, of becoming more truly alive than we are or ever can be here, because it is to become free from that which is the greatest obstruction to the activity and development of all our real life.

You see, then, what a different view of death St. Paul's use of this word opens to us from that which commonly prevails among men. The world talks of death as the end of life; it looks upon it as the suspension, if not the cessation, of our active being, and all beyond it as vague, dim, and stagnant. According to St. Paul, death is properly the beginning of a newer, larger, brighter life, compared with which our life here is in reality the feeble, visionary, struggling state. To depart is the act of entrance upon this better condition, of passing from the dark and obscure, the weak and imperfect, to the bright and blessed condition of the liberated soul. And further, the word itself which he employs—to depart, or literally, to set sail—conveys the notion of an easiness, an absence

of all shock and violence in the change, which is alike opposed to the prevalent notions about death. Nature shrinks from death as what is most abhorrent and appalling, the King of Terrors, in the words of Job. St. Paul says that it is to depart, to set sail, as a ship looses gently from the shore without shock or struggle, and cleaves its bright path smoothly and swiftly through the waters.

And here I may observe that this view of death is not confined to the New Testament only, but substantially pervades the entire Bible from beginning to end, although in the Old Testament and before our Lord's coming it is revealed less distinctly. Still, even in the Old Testament death is set before us under a very different character from that in which it is regarded by the world. God's servants do not seem to be afraid of death at all. There is nothing gloomy in their way of looking at it. In the deathbeds of which we have an account, such as those of the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph, there is a tranquil waiting for God's call which agrees with St. Paul's anticipation, and which would be almost inconceivable if they had not a hope similar to his. They are gathered to their people; they sleep with their fathers. Jacob says when he is dying: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Joseph says to his brethren: "I die," and then gives direction about burying

him in Canaan. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore they live after death as before. This comes out more strongly as the history advances, and in the twenty-third Psalm the words in which the Psalmist describes himself as looking forward to death express almost the same expectation as the apostle's: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Though it was a valley and dark through which he should pass, yet God his Shepherd, our Lord's own title in the New Testament, would be with him, and he would have no fear.

There is one remarkable illustration of death, in the view of which I am now speaking, to be found in the Old Testament which I cannot pass by without noticing. I refer to the passage of Jordan by the children of Israel, which is described in the book of Joshua. This great event in the history of God's chosen people has always been regarded as a signal type of what death is to the Christian. And in this view observe what it teaches. The Israelites were on their way to the promised land. The river Jordan interposed, sweeping with its broad, dark flood, between them and their inheritance which lay on the other side in all its unknown brightness and beauty. How

were they to reach it? The priests bearing the ark of God were commanded to advance before the host and to enter the river, and as soon as their feet touched the water the stream was arrested, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground. The meaning of the type is obvious. The Israelites represent the Church; the promised land is a figure of the heavenly country; the ark is a type of our Saviour; and Jordan of death, that unknown boundary which we must all cross. But there is in truth no fear or danger to the Christian. Christ, the true Ark, is there before him, there with him, and when the priests' feet touch the water it is turned to dry ground. They must come in faith to the waters. They must see them. They must boldly and blindly enter. The priests' feet must touch them, but that is all. Christ is there and the waters are restrained. It is another parallel with St. Paul's words and with the twenty-third Psalm, as well as the words of the prophet: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

And before I leave this type, it will not be out of place to remind you of the comment on it with which the *Pilgrim's Progress* closes. "This river," says one of the pilgrims, "has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often

frighted me. But now methinks I stand easy; my foot is fixed upon that upon which the feet of the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant stood while Israel went over this Jordan. The waters indeed are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold, yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey, my toilsome days are ended. I am going now to see that Head that was crowned with thorns, and that Face that was spit upon, for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet, and His countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. . . . Now while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed, his strong man bowed under him, and when he had said, 'Take me, for I come unto Thee,' he ceased to be seen of them."

But it is in the New Testament that this view of death as an easy passage from a lesser to a

greater life is fully brought out, and to this I return. Every one who reads the New Testament must be struck with the fact that little or nothing is there said about death in the ordinary sense in which it is understood,—nothing about the circumstances of death, the dread, the suffering, the helplessness, the darkness and decay of the grave, —but that all the references to it are of an opposite character—peaceful, bright, and comforting. The grave is mentioned, but how? Not in connection with decay and corruption, but with life, with the resurrection of our Lord, of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Our Lord is laid in the grave in the same way as all men had been laid there from the beginning. The holy women return to do for Him the same sad offices of respect and affection which had been paid to so many before. But what do they find? The grave is empty. Angels clad in white are seated at the head and feet where His body had lain. The whole place seems filled with a vision of angels. Thenceforth the grave has wholly changed its character, for life has been where death always was before, and for us as well as for Him it is now ever associated with life. The nature of the grave is changed; it is abolished in that character which it had borne from the time of Adam, and which for the Christian it never can bear again.

Death and the grave are slain and extinguished, or swallowed up and absorbed in the presence of life. God the Son has lain there, and by the brightness of His presence has wholly consumed the darkness and horror that brooded there before. The glory of God, the true Shekinah, has rested on the grave and filled it thenceforth with sweet and ineffable light. It is impossible for us to think of the grave of Christ, and to think at the same time of fear and darkness. The very thought of His grave brings with it all associations of life and light. And it is equally impossible to believe with a lively faith and hope in our own relations to Him and to His grave, and at the same time associate our own with gloom.

Thus the grave, in the New Testament revelation of it, is not an object rendered more tolerable, so to speak, by the introduction of a better hope; it is not that our blessed Lord has armed us in a new way to meet its terrors, which, however, must still be met; it is a different object, opposed in its very nature to what it was before, redolent of life, the scene of angelic presences, fragrant with the passage of an immortal body which has traversed its chambers, leaving there the sweetness of an imperishable hope, instead of being the receptacle of corruption, the last sad dwelling of the wreck and ruin of our nature. This is what

the grave has been made for us by Christ. And death itself—the act of dying—where it is referred to at all, is characterised in the very same way, or in a way similar, to that employed by St. Paul in the text. In another place, for instance, the same apostle refers to his own death in these words: "I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand." Here the mode or form of death which he anticipates is that of martyrdom—"I am ready to be offered"—but it is the same thing to him as if it was the easiest death, and does not affect his view of the act itself. "The time of my departure is at hand"—he calls it his departure, using the same word, descriptive of an easy removal. Again, he speaks of his death as the taking down of a tent in which he had sojourned: "We know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Here the body is represented as a temporary dwelling like a tabernacle, easily taken down and removed, and this is done by death. St. Peter applies the same image in his own case, where he speaks of his body as a tent: "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ

hath showed me." And he also knew that he was to die by martyrdom.

Another way in which death is referred to in the New Testament is as a sleep. Our Lord, speaking of the death of Lazarus, says that he slept: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." St. Stephen, when he was stoned, is said to have fallen asleep. Christians are described as those that sleep in Jesus. This word sleep is used not in reference to the soul, but in reference to the body. We are not to suppose that the state of the soul at death either is or in any way resembles a state of sleep, for such a notion would be entirely opposed to that intense and more perfect life on which the soul enters in the act of its departure. The word sleep, even in what we know of its meaning from our present experience, is not applicable to the soul at all. It has reference wholly to the body. Sleep is that provision by which the powers of the body weakened or wasted during the day are repaired at night, and made capable of renewed work; and this goes on from day to day, till the body is finally worn out and can be no more restored here. Meanwhile the soul is ever quick and active even while bound to the body, and will be much more so when wholly freed from it. It is the body that sleeps now, and that will sleep in

death. But the use of this word sleep as equivalent to death is very significant even though it applies only to the body. It teaches that while the Christian goes to Christ, even his body in some sense enjoys rest as in sleep ; and further, that as the very notion of sleep is that of a temporary condition of the body, and implies waking, so when the Christian is said to sleep thus, it plainly conveys to us that his body is resting but for a time ; that it *only* sleeps ; that it is not dead in the sad and hopeless sense of mere nature, but will awaken again out of that sleep on the morning of the resurrection.

These, then, are some of the ways in which the Bible speaks of death itself—of what takes place in dying—in the case of God's true children. It is setting sail from a foreign shore for a blessed country and home. It is going down to the brink of a deep river which must be crossed, but only touching it with the feet, for one is there to meet and bring us over dryshod. It is passing through a valley, but guided and sustained by the great Shepherd. It is the taking down of the frail tent in which we now dwell, and leaving it. It is the sleep of the body—the body only—its sleep in Jesus ; in His hands and care, from which it shall awake refreshed to live for ever ; and the very grave in which it lies is no longer a grave in the

old sense, a place of darkness and extinction, but rather a cradle for the coming resurrection.

And before I conclude I may just observe that the deathbeds—if I may so call them—of which we read in the New Testament are entirely in keeping with its teaching about death itself. There are three deaths of those of whose final happiness we are sure recorded in the New Testament—the death of the beggar in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the death of the penitent thief, and the death of St. Stephen in the book of Acts—and the one common feature of all three is their ineffable peace and brightness, heightened by a contrast with their external circumstances which are marked by all that man recoils from. The beggar is laid at the rich man's gate full of sores, among the dogs, and fed with the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. This was death to him: a passage from want and suffering of the most miserable kind into the very arms of angels; the angels meeting, receiving, welcoming him as he left the body. What brightness and joyous exultation is here! The penitent thief is stretched upon a cross, in agonies greater and more protracted than we with our merciful modes of dealing with forfeited life can comprehend; but in the midst of all the words were

spoken to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." That very day which was declining then should find him before it ended with his Saviour in Paradise. St. Stephen lay mangled and bleeding on the ground, smitten to death by the stones hurled upon him in their fury by his persecutors; but he looked up and saw heaven open and his Saviour standing, as it were, to receive him, and his last words were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had so said, he fell asleep. This is what death was to these three. The company of angels; the presence of Christ in Paradise; the sight of Christ ready to receive His servant.

And now let me in conclusion remind you why it is that death is thus totally changed in nature for the Christian; why it has so lost its old terrors and bitterness and become a quiet passage from darkness to light. Why? because Christ has once tasted death for every man; He has tasted the cup of gall and bitterness that it might be comparatively sweet to us. He has trod the wine-press alone, that we might walk through the valley of the shadow of death with Him and fear no evil. Well may we stand in wonder and adoration and exclaim, "Behold what manner of love is this! Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some

would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." But remember—alas, that we should need the warning—though He has done thus for us all—tasted death for every man—it is only those who now die with Him to sin and to the world, and live to Him who died for them and rose again, to whom death when it comes will lose its bitterness, and be a calm, peaceful, hopeful passage into His blessed presence.

IV

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."—PHIL. i. 23.

SOME here are probably aware that among the days which were removed from our Calendar at the Reformation was that of All Souls. Yesterday was All Saints' Day, and it was followed by All Souls' Day, the observance of which was, however, then discontinued, and properly, owing to the superstitious purposes to which it had been abused. But those did not necessarily belong to the day itself, the design of which was to keep in remembrance those of our brethren who have departed out of this life and are now waiting, as we too are looking forward, for the day of the resurrection. To-day, then, brings before our minds the state of those departed in the faith and fear of God: it is the day of the blessed dead. And it invites us to dwell on the condition in which they now are, where we ourselves shall soon join

them if we are prepared, and which St. Paul describes in the words of the text.

These words answer, in the case of that entire class to which St. Paul belongs, the most important question that can be asked about any human being,—a question compared with which every other question that concerns us shrinks into insignificance. The question is this: What will become of me when I die? Many people—most people, perhaps—would say, I do not know. And they would try to stifle the pain attending the admission, and to hide it from others by asking in their turn, How can I know? How can anybody know? It would be presumptuous to attempt to speak with any certainty on such a subject. We have no positive information given us about the state which immediately succeeds the present one, and into which we pass when we die. We are only told that there is a state of happiness and a state of suffering to which each of us must go: this is all the information we have. And while I hope through God's mercy to escape the latter, I dare not say that I am fit for the former. This is all that I can say then,—all probably that any one has a right to say. Others would answer that we know nothing certain at all about the future life itself—that we are to all intents in the dark—in fact, they would speak as if they felt that there

was something almost absurd in the notion that it was possible for man really to know what was to be our condition when we die. And yet the question is about what is to become of us, each one, maybe to-night, — certainly within a given time, be it long or short; where we shall be, what we shall be, and how we shall be, and that for ever. This is the question which so many think is insoluble.

Now this question the Bible, and the Bible alone, answers. We have no certainty about the future state except from the Christian religion. In saying this I do not undervalue the natural arguments on the subject; but they are no more than arguments; the Bible gives us facts. In the text, as I said, it answers this question for all those who belong to the same class with St. Paul—that is, for all true Christians—and the answer is indeed direct, clear, and precise, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." To depart, then, for true Christians is to be with Christ.

From these words I propose now to consider what we are taught in Holy Scripture about the intermediate state, as it is called—that is, the state which at once succeeds death, and will continue till the resurrection. You know that our condition when we die, though determined, is not

complete. Those who are saved are happy, and shall be happy always; those who are lost shall suffer, and must suffer always. So far the condition of both admits of no change. But the happiness of the good and the punishment of the wicked will not be fully completed till the resurrection. In this view of the subject there are three distinct states through which every one must pass. There is, first, the state of the present life in which our nature consists of body and soul united, and forming together one man. This union is broken when we die: we then separate entirely from the body, which we leave behind us, and our nature and personality will be confined to the soul alone. From the moment of death we shall cease to be body and soul: we shall be souls only. This is the intermediate state. At the resurrection the body which has lain in the grave, been reduced to dust, dispersed, and, so far as man can judge, has perished, will be raised to life again, reunited to the soul, and that reunion will continue for ever. This is the final state. So that our nature and personality now and after the resurrection will agree in this; they will consist in the union of the two great elements, the material and the spiritual, body and soul. In this respect, that is, in what makes up our personality, we shall not differ at the resurrection from what we are now.

And we can, therefore, to the same extent, realise that condition which, however raised and purified, will still correspond in its essential character with the present one, in which the entire man will be again as he is now. But in the intermediate state —the state that intervenes between death, the separation of body and soul, and the resurrection, the reunion of them—our condition will be one which we have no experience to correspond with. And hence the difficulty we find in attempting to realise it. We know that the body is the instrument through which we communicate with the visible world, and that at death we shall leave the body behind us. Whether after we are divested of the body we shall possess any other medium of communication, or whether, as some suppose, all souls do actually retain a subtle material vehicle after death, so that they are never in the condition of pure spirit, we cannot tell. All we know with certainty is that our present medium of intercourse with the material world will then be destroyed. On the other hand, we must remember that it is the soul which now gives life to the body, and not only thinks and feels, but is conscious of all bodily sensations, while at the same time itself communicates directly, and without the help of our lower nature, with the unseen world. Our loss, therefore, in being deprived of the body, and the imperfection

of the state consequent on that privation, may be far less after all than it would seem to be, judging from our present experience, since it will only deprive us of that organ and instrument through which we communicate with the present world, not of that by which we communicate with the unseen ; while deliverance from the body, which is now the special seat of sin and corruption, which weighs down and obstructs the soul in all its higher aspirations, and can be restored only through entire dissolution, will be a positive gain, and enlarge our powers of intercourse with the invisible world to an extent which we cannot even conceive. In this way the intermediate state, although imperfect when compared with the resurrection, will be perfect in comparison with our state in the present life.

It was necessary to say so much, in the first instance, of this difference between our present state and the intermediate state—a difference which will cease at the resurrection. When we die we shall be without our bodies, and at the resurrection those bodies will be restored to us again. But I shall not dwell any longer upon this difference, because it will be shared by the good and the bad alike, and my object now is to confine what I have to say to the state after death of the good only ; to those to whom St. Paul's words are applicable when he says, "Having a

desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

1. And the first thing we learn from them is this: that to the true Christian the intermediate state must be far better and happier than the very best and happiest condition in which he can be placed in the present life. This follows at once from the apostle's words. But now consider what a great and wonderful prospect is opened to us by this one statement—"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Better than what? Better than it is to remain here. But to whom is it better? Better, in the first instance, to St. Paul, for it is of himself that he is speaking. And now see how much is comprised in this fact. St. Paul was one of our Lord's greatest apostles. He had seen our Saviour after His ascension into glory. He was converted by a miraculous interposition from heaven. He was a chosen vessel of Christ to bear His name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. He was filled with the Holy Ghost. He was inspired, so that words of his, spoken as well as written, were words of God. He was favoured with an abundance of revelations. He had intercourse with angels. He was rapt into Paradise while still a living man, and heard words which man could not utter. He cast out devils, wrought

miracles, raised the dead: they even brought to the sick handkerchiefs and aprons taken from his body, and the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out of them. These were some of the divine gifts and powers with which he was favoured. And these were, so far, external. Then, as to his inward state, he was filled with the holiest and most blessed affections. The love of Christ glowed within him, and constrained him as a burning impulse. He counted all things but loss for Christ; he gloried only in the cross of Christ; to him to live was Christ; he was crucified with Christ, and the life he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God. And next to this love of his Lord the love of man, and especially of Christ's members, burned in him with almost equal intensity. His heart's desire and prayer for Israel was that they might be saved. He could wish himself accursed for his brethren. His converts were dearly beloved and longed for—his joy and crown. And again, he speaks of himself as always rejoicing, making many rich, possessing all things. Now consider how great this man was in God's gifts and favours inward and outward; how rich in possessions, such as natural powers and endowments, which even the most earthly mind can appreciate; how happy in a soul ever glowing with love to God

and to all men; chosen of Christ here on earth, living in His presence a heavenly life, with his work allotted to him, and sustained to do it,—can we conceive anything higher and more blessed than this lot? Well, then, he says himself that to depart was better; and not better only, but far better. And in saying this he speaks of the state in general, not as referring specially to his own condition in it. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better"—that is, the condition of those who depart is better to him than his own condition here. What a prospect do these words open of the blessedness of the intermediate state! That state is better, far better, than the highest state to which the greatest saint can be raised while still upon earth.

2. But how is the intermediate state better than the present state of Christ's servants? In what respect does it excel? First, it is better in this, that it is a state of perfect safety. As long as we are in this world we cannot be absolutely secure of salvation, because we are on our trial while we are here, and trial implies the possibility of failure, and whatever depends in any degree upon ourselves must be uncertain. This uncertainty must continue as long as life continues. To the very last moment on earth—though the probability, and even the possibility, may be re-

duced to the lowest degree—we still may fail, and must ever carry about with us that utter distrust of ourselves which is at once the evidence of our helplessness and the best security against its effects. But when we die, and from the moment of death, uncertainty is at an end for ever. The Christian's soul is safe, and he knows that it is safe. The voyage is ended; the port is reached. The long struggle is over. Eternal salvation is won. The night of doubt and perplexity, of groping and wandering, of stumbling on the dark mountains with dim eyes and weary feet and weakened limbs—all is at an end now. He can look back and see the road which he has travelled, the dangers he has surmounted, the places and occasions when he was in the greatest extremity; he can look back with wonder and awe and increased gratitude to Him who brought him through all, but without any apprehension. He can look forward and feel that whatever awaits him in the life on which he has entered, he has nothing more to fear. He may advance, but he can never fall back. The soul may grow and ripen in all goodness and bliss, but there can never be blight or failure again; it has left sin behind it for ever. Its safety depends upon the condition which it has reached. He can look back, and forward, and around, with that sense of

entire security, enhanced by the thought of danger for ever past, which we can never feel here on earth, but which we can at least conceive as in itself placing those to whom it is given in a condition of exalted repose, of imperturbable blessedness, above any that it is possible to reach on this side of the grave.

3. Again, the blessedness of the intermediate state is greater and better than any which is attainable here, in this: it is the blessedness of the invisible Church. Those who die in the grace of Christ pass into the invisible Church. When I speak of the invisible Church I do not mean that our Lord has two churches—the one visible, and the other invisible. The Church of Christ is the mystical body of Christ, and an essential attribute of that body is that it is one. It was formed on the day of Pentecost; it has grown and expanded for two thousand years, and it will exist upon earth till the world ends. But part of His body is seen and part of it is unseen. That part which in each generation is upon earth is visible, and that part which passes out of the world becomes invisible, but it does not on that account cease to be part of the Church, nor is the unity and continuity of the entire body broken. This is what I mean by saying that the Christian at death passes from the visible to the invisible

Church. He does not join a different body, but merely moves from that part of the Church which we can see to that part which we cannot see. The movement of the Church is thus like the progress of some vast multitude, or rather like a great organised army on its march, part of which is far in advance of the rest and is lost to sight, but is not less an essential portion of the whole, under the same leaders and with the same destination as that which is still seen. So it is with the Christian when he dies. He moves onward to that part of the Church which has reached one great stage in its destination, and is waiting now within the vail for the final consummation. We cannot see him any longer, that is all. We are not less closely united to him and he to us than when he was upon earth. Nay, the ties which bind us are indeed stronger, because on his side they are more freed from imperfection. We are united to those who have departed in Christ, in the one Lord, by the same spirit, in affections and sympathies, in that unity and fellowship of the spirit which death may refine and purify, but cannot impair. We are still near to them and they to us; we are one with them, and more especially in worship, and the celebration of the Holy Communion, when our weak prayers unite and blend with their more perfect adoration. We

are near them; in reality, perhaps, nearer than when we enjoyed their earthly presence. Who can tell? Who has sounded the mysteries of prayer or the transcendent depths of Eucharistic communion? This is what is meant by the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. There is a real and intimate union and communion between the faithful on earth and those who have departed, who are knit together by the closest bonds, though deprived of the tie of sensible intercourse. And the same truth is plainly taught in Scripture, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle says of Christians now: "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect." That is, we who are still upon earth are actually joined, as members of the Church, to the one body, the one household of God, the one family in heaven and earth, which embraces within it the spirits of the just. But we know this now only by faith; the departed know it in fact and consciously. And so those who one by one leave us and enter the shelter of the invisible Church are thereby admitted to a higher state and a more perfect fruition, to a better knowledge, a closer

connection even with us who are below, than it is possible to attain in the Church here.

4. This blessedness of theirs is spoken of in many places of Scripture as well as in the text; but there are three ways in which it is described, representing three distinct aspects of it, of which I shall here remind you. In the book of the Revelation the state of the faithful departed seems to be represented by the vision of the souls under the altar; in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus they are said to be in Abraham's bosom; and in our Lord's promise to the penitent thief the state to which they are admitted is called Paradise. Now consider what these several descriptions signify. They are, as you observe, quite distinct and independent of one another, and have each of them their appropriate meaning in reference to the intermediate state. And what is that meaning? First, what is meant by the souls under the altar? An altar is and always has been the most sacred object belonging to the worship of God. It belongs especially to God, being that upon which all offerings made to Him are presented. It has also, from the earliest times, been regarded as a place of security—a sanctuary or refuge for those whose lives were threatened, and who, clinging to God's altar, were safe. This attribute of an altar follows from the former one.

It was a place of refuge because it was God's altar which none dare profane. These two ideas then belong to an altar—the idea of sanctity and the idea of protection. And if this be so, we may now learn what that particular aspect of the intermediate state is which is represented by the souls under the altar. It represents them as being in a state of sacred security, as being in a holy place, and as being in a safe place; and this in the strongest way. As they are not said to be near the altar for protection, but actually under the altar, and so in the most perfect shelter that even it can afford, St. Augustine supposes that by the altar under which they rest is signified our Lord's humanity—that is, that they are sheltered by our Lord Himself, which agrees with that other expression of St. Paul, that they sleep in Christ.

Again, in the parable Lazarus is said to be in Abraham's bosom. Here the image is borrowed from a feast, where, instead of sitting, as we do, the ancients reclined upon couches, so arranged that they leant forward on cushions, their feet projecting behind, and one rested partly on the bosom of the person next to him. Hence St. John leant on our Lord's breast at the Last Supper; and Mary, when she anointed our Lord's feet in the house of Simon, stood at His feet behind Him. Now this representation of the

intermediate state under the figure of a feast presents it in an aspect entirely different from the former one. The prominent notions of a feast are equal social intercourse, attended with abundance and rejoicing. The state of the invisible Church then is here represented as that of a holy and joyful society, where all share equal intercourse, and there is no want of anything. In the third instance—our Lord's words to the penitent thief—He gives a name to the intermediate state, and calls it Paradise. This word Paradise signifies a shady garden, and it is used in reference to the Garden of Eden, the abode of man before the fall, to the future and perfect state of the saints, and to the intermediate state of the faithful departed. The word itself then, and the application of it to Eden as well as to the final abode of the blessed, denotes a place of peaceful rest and refreshment, like a shaded garden in the sultry East, perhaps the most grateful object that could be presented to the thoughts in such a climate. And now see what these three passages under various aspects discover to us respecting the intermediate state. It is a state of perfect security under God's immediate protection and care; it is a place of rest and refreshment like the Garden of Eden; and it is a holy and happy society, including the entire company gathered in one who are waiting for their

final consummation and bliss at the resurrection. There are all the souls of the blessed whom God has taken to Himself from the beginning—apostles, martyrs, saints, the holy angels who have ministered to them, the whole unseen Church ; waiting till God accomplishes the number of His elect ; waiting till we, such of us as are fit, join them ; waiting in perpetual peace, in endless adoration, not forgetting us, sympathising with us here, hearing of us as saint after saint joins the throng, worshipping with us, praying for us, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

5. Lastly. To enter the intermediate state is to be with Christ. Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, or, as St. Paul says in another place, present with the Lord, dwelling with Him as in the same country or city. This, if we were told nothing else, is more than enough to assure us of the exalted blessedness of that state, and this includes in itself all other blessedness beside. "To be with Christ is life, and where Christ is there is His Kingdom," says St. Ambrose. And Christ is there. It was this that made St. Paul desire to depart, and this is the hope which he sets before us too. When the Christian soul departs from this world he goes to Christ. He goes to his Maker, his Redeemer, his merciful Saviour ; his Lord who has bought him, restored him, guided

him, and now finally saves him. And he goes consciously. To be with Christ when we depart is to be with Him without any interposing medium. It is to know that we are with Him, to know that we know Him, that we love Him, that He accepts us, and that we shall never lose Him. And he goes at once. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," says the apostle; as if the very moment of departure was also the moment of entering His presence, as if to depart and to be with Christ were actually the same thing. So it was with St. Stephen. He saw Christ when he was dying, and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So, when he had died, Christ, whom he had seen, received his spirit. What a thought is this! The eyes closing now upon this present world of confusion and strife, and opening upon the holy calm of the unseen Church; closing upon suffering and sorrow and opening upon joy that shall not end; closing on darkness and opening on light; closing—closing for ever on all the powers of evil and the sense and presence of sin, and opening upon Him who is Himself Light and Life, Holiness and Love.

V

THE MEETING OF FRIENDS

"And he delivered him to his mother."—LUKE vii. 15.

THE passage from which these words are taken relates our Lord's miracle of raising the widow's son, and is a record of human sorrow. A mourning train moves out of the gate of a city; they bear the body of a dead man; he was cut off in youth; he was the only son; his mother was a widow. And much people of the city, touched by her affliction, were with her as she followed the remains to the grave; and when she had laid them there, what was before her? An altered, empty home, if indeed it could now be called a home, from which he who was once the light of it had passed away, and where every object on which her eyes rested would only quicken the sense of her loneliness and bereavement. It is sad to dwell upon, but not strange. It is happening about us every day. It must happen, in its measure, to each and all. It is man's history.

We must part. We meet but to part. A little sooner or a little later, the mother before the child, or the child before the mother, this is all the difference. It makes the spirits sink and the heart grow cold to think of it, and so men will not think of it, but it must come nevertheless. It is a thought ever fresh and ever piercing; it can darken the most joyous prospects as a sudden cloud crossing the sun at mid-day; it has power in the simple bareness of it to sober men in their maddest hours if it only comes home to them; yet it is no more than an every-day event, as common and natural as eating and drinking, rising up and lying down. We are the children of Adam and must die. He has left us the inheritance and we cannot escape it.

This is the scene here presented to us—a scene as old as the fall and as fresh as yesterday. But it is not all. What a contrast! As the sad train moves on, One draws nigh to meet it—One who seems no more than man, and even that in a poor station. He is *man*, for we are told that when He saw the widowed and childless mother He had compassion on her; yet He must be more than man, for He says to her, "Weep not," and as He touches the bier, the bearers stand still. What a pause is this! and what is about to happen? All eyes are turned towards Him, and men's hearts

are beating quick, they know not why; even that bereaved mother wakens for a moment from the abstraction of her grief, while a dim, bewildered hope moves within her heart. The silence is broken by the word of power: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."

Now what may we learn from this narrative, and especially from the last words of it? The stupendous nature of the miracle itself plainly teaches us our Lord's divine power, and the circumstances under which it was wrought equally show us His gracious compassion towards human sufferers. This is the outward and superficial lesson of the miracle which even the dullest of the bystanders might collect from it for themselves. May we penetrate any deeper into its meaning, and reach to more hidden and precious truth? Let us with reverence try to do so.

1. And first, we see in this miracle a pledge and beginning of that new creation of which our Lord is the source and head. All our Saviour's miracles, in addition to their external character as manifestations of His power, had also a moral and mystical import. These lay hid beneath the outward act to be brought forth in due time for those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. When our

Lord restored the widow's son to life, it was not then a mere exercise of power to arrest and convince men's minds; it was not only an act of divine pity, healing an otherwise incurable grief. It was a revelation of Himself, His nature, His character, and the work He had undertaken. Suffering and death were the character of the old creation—men had known nothing else. A short life and full of trouble, and then the grave. Adam was the beginning of the old creation, and in Adam all die. Adam was a fountain of death to all who came from him. Such was the state of man when our Lord came to found a new creation, to purchase life by His obedience and sufferings, and to communicate it from His own person, as Adam had conveyed death from his. He is the new Man, and in Him accordingly begins a new order and dispensation. He is the Life, Who comes into a world of death, and it revives. As Aaron, His type, stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed, so He stands between those who are still living and those who have died, and even the dead come to life again. He comes into a world where all speaks of death, or is akin to it,—into a world of sickness, sorrow, pain, decrepitude, and decay,—and He changes all at His presence. It is like a burst of spring in the heart of winter. Wherever He goes drooping

nature lifts up its head. There is an exuberant outgoing of life from His person that already conquers death with all its accessories and precursors. All the forms of suffering that lead to the one dark end are dispersed at His approach. The blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the impotent become strong; even the woman who touches but the hem of His garment as He is going to raise the dead is healed. Thus there is life, or the promise of life in restored health and the revival of suspended or decayed powers, wherever He goes. And what was this but, as I said, a manifestation of His nature and mission in those very acts by which He declared His power, and which thus became a visible expression of the one, as they were an evidence of the other? Nay, His miracles seem not so much an exercise of power as a condition of His presence, fulfilling those words of the Psalmist, "In thy presence is life." It was as if that fulness of life which dwelt in Him could not be controlled or repressed, but must, by a necessity of its bounteous nature, gush out on all sides to invigorate and restore.

2. But further. Our Lord appears in this miracle not only as giving life to the body, but as healing the inner wounds of the spirit. For why was the widow's son restored to life? Surely whatever

higher ends may have been served by this great miracle, the narrative seems to tell us that in one sense, at any rate, it was wrought for the sake of the bereaved mother. Thus, when our Lord saw her first, He had compassion on her, and said, "Weep not." And then, after the raising of her son, the words of the text are added, "He delivered him to his mother." As if He was not content to restore the gift of life, but must also Himself bind up the broken heart, and with His own gracious hand reunite those whom death had divided. And what does this action signify? What is the meaning of this wonderful, transporting vision in a world of sorrow? What does the Lord of Life intend to teach when He restores a son to life and to the heart of a bereaved parent? Surely it must be more than a prophecy of what is yet to be. He delivered him to his mother. Will not then the day come when many mothers and many sons, many severed hearts, shall be reunited by Him in ties of love without alloy and without end?

With this thought in view, let us now dwell for a while on some of the proofs that God has given us in support of what is one of the dearest hopes of our nature, namely, that we shall know each other hereafter; that death is but a short separation, and those whom it parts here will, if found

worthy, be reunited again where there shall be no more parting.

1. The first proof of this which I shall mention is to be found in the very nature of particular attachments. God has made us for them, and we cannot exist without them. Love is an essential part of our nature, and it must have its objects. It was made for man as well as for God. It is nothing to the purpose that in our present disordered state these two functions so often clash and interfere, that we love the creature more than the Creator, giving it that place in the heart which belongs to Him. We need not do this. Indeed, in doing so we dishonour even the creatures whom we love, and whose greatest glory is not apart from God, but in Him and through Him. But now take this subordinate love in any of man's earthly relations and consider it. What does it express and testify concerning itself? Look at its constancy through life, its willingness to do and to endure for the beloved object. See how sorrow and suffering, and lapse of time, instead of detaching, only serve to rivet it more closely; how nothing by which it is tried can weary or provoke—nothing can embitter or alienate it; how love alone warms even the extremest age, and shines out with perhaps a tenderer, purer ray over the wreck of vanished years—over the long road of

life strewn with its fallen forest leaves—amid the prostration of strength, the failure of memory, the decay of all other faculties, and the heavy shadows of a closing day. Love alone does not die before death. All other things do. The limbs fail, the eye grows dim, the tongue falters, the glory of the intellect departs, and the spacious chambers of thought are empty. Love alone remains, surviving all. And is not this a prediction and pledge that it will still live on, and find again those to whom it has never been untrue? Are not all God's works complete and perfect, and shall we acknowledge a break and failure in that one work which in our nature discovers most of Himself? As physiologists have traced in inferior creatures the rudiments of a higher order of being which yet in their own age was never called into existence, though their nature thus stood a mute prophecy of a coming creation, so may we perhaps see in earthly love—never blessed, never perfected here, still yearning after those it loses and refusing comfort—a pledge and presage of what will be in that better order when God will comfort it by giving back the lost again.

2. But, after all, this is only what nature says. Let us turn then to the Gospel, and see how far it confirms the hope of being united hereafter. Consider, in the next place, how the doctrine of our

Lord's Incarnation bears upon the fulfilment of it. God the Son has taken upon Him the nature of man in all its essential parts and properties. As He is God from all eternity, so in time He assumed the manhood to Himself in the one person. Thus God and Man are one Christ. But to what a place is our whole nature exalted through this ineffable mystery, and with what a transcendent importance does it clothe every element in its composition! Whatever constitutes man now belongs to the person of Him who is God. It is something too great to convey in words, yet it is plain that all our faculties and powers are by this union raised to a dignity above that which belongs to any other creature, and endowed with a permanence which awes and confounds the thought. This is what we mean when we say that the Son of God was made man,—born of the Virgin Mary. He took into His Godhead our entire nature with all its abiding attributes,—soul and body, reason and will, feeling, affection, sympathy,—and made them His own for ever. And this being so, let us now observe what light it throws on the subject of future recognition. Now it must at once strike us in reading the gospels that when our Lord was on earth, He did not manifest Himself to all those who were about Him in the same way or with the same measure of favour. We see this even in the

case of the multitudes whom He taught or healed; but we see it more distinctly in the case of those who were admitted to a nearer intercourse with Him. Some were allowed to approach Him more closely, and some remained farther off; some were distinguished with peculiar favour, and admitted, if I may use the expression, to an intimacy not vouchsafed to the rest. In other words, our blessed Lord appears to have Himself exercised those particular affections of which I have been speaking; this element of our nature appears to have belonged to Him. Thus we find that He chose twelve of His disciples to accompany Him wherever He went, and of these twelve three again were especially selected to be with Him at the raising of Jairus's daughter, at the Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. Again, we are told that St. John was the beloved disciple; that He called St. Peter blessed, that He forewarned him of his fall, that He looked upon him from the hall of judgment, gave him, as it were, a pledge of pardon in the special tidings of His resurrection, and finally addressed him thrice in those words of so great tenderness and so little reproach, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Again, He said to the eleven, "I call you not servants, but friends." Again, we are told that Jesus loved Martha and Mary, and Lazarus; and that He

also loved, yet with what a different love it must have been, the young man who had great possessions. And lastly, can we hear that single word addressed to the weeping Magdalen after His resurrection—her own name—without feeling that it is the utterance of an especial regard? If then we can thus discover in our blessed Saviour the tokens of this discriminating affection, this choice of one before another to be more nearly and intimately His, the fact is in itself a proof that particular attachments are no transitory and fleeting element in our nature, suited for this state only and not to survive beyond it, but that, by being His, they belong to what is essential and imperishable in us, and will outlive the accidents and the end of this condition of our being.

3. And I may observe further, that throughout the New Testament we find particular ties and friendships, instead of being dissolved or weakened by the Gospel, rendered, as we might indeed anticipate, far deeper, purer, and more firm. For example—to take a case which I have already instanced—consider the wonderful way in which Peter, James, and John were associated when our Lord drew those three so close to Himself. But must not this fact of their union in Him have been the ground of a friendship truer and more exalted than anything earthly could originate? Or the

love of Jesus to Lazarus and his sisters, what must that love have made them to each other? or think of our Saviour's last words to His mother and to St. John, and what an effect those divine words must have wrought on both! Again, observe the overflowing tenderness of St. Paul to his converts throughout his writings—the way in which he speaks of his son Timothy, his son Titus, his son Onesimus; Luke, the beloved physician; Barnabas, his fellow-apostle; Philemon, his dearly beloved and fellow-labourer; Epaphroditus, for whose sickness he was so much grieved; Clement and his fellow-labourers, whose names were in the Book of Life; the Philippians, beloved and longed for, his joy and crown; and the Thessalonians, of whom he actually says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Are these friendships of a kind to end with death? Are these friends for time only or for eternity? Can we suppose that the apostles, knit so closely in their Lord, ceased to know each other when their life here closed; that Peter and James and John were friends only on earth; that St. Paul was not to know any more his son Timothy, whom he begot in the Gospel, or Philemon, whom he reminds that he owed to him his own self; that Timothy was never to meet

his mother Eunice, whose unfeigned faith St. Paul commends, and to whose early instruction he himself owed all that he was? Surely it is superfluous to multiply such questions. The existence of these ties and affections under such circumstances implies their continuance; but if it does so in them, it does so in us likewise, though so far behind them. For the Church is one, and if we are members of it at all, we are admitted to the same privileges as the apostles and their converts—as the whole body of believers from the beginning to the end.

4. And this leads me to mention one proof more. I add, then, that our knowledge of one another hereafter may be deduced from the very nature of the Christian Church itself. By our natural birth we are members of a human society, all whose bonds and connections belong to this world, and have their natural termination in it. As parents and children, masters and servants, rulers and subjects, we belong altogether to time; we begin here and we end here. I speak now of the ties which connect us on earth, not of the affections which often cement those ties, and are often independent of them. The latter, no doubt, as I said before, carry us beyond time, but the former do not; they are wholly temporal, and are not in any way suggestive of another life, much less of their own continuance there. There is no

society on earth, nor ever has been, to claim immortality, except one, and that is the Church of Christ. The Church does claim it. The Church of the first-born, the heavenly Jerusalem, the City that hath foundations, the Church of the living God, the House of God, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, the Body of Christ, has its home and abode not here, but in a higher state. It does not belong to earth; it is a stranger and pilgrim on earth. Into this society then we enter by a second birth, and are made partakers of divine privileges and a heavenly inheritance. Mark then the contrast and the consequence. All our relations as natural men and members of human society are of the earth, and end there. All our relations as Christians are unearthly, heavenly; and though they begin here, have not their scope here, but are limited, compressed, controlled, by the elements and atmosphere of this world, by our sins and infirmities, failures and imperfections, which belong to the old nature; and, as it were, strain and struggle through the entanglements of time for that state in which only they can have their freedom and consummation. This is our position as Christians, little as the majority of us acknowledge or attempt to realise it. The Christian parent is bound to the Christian child, the Christian husband to the Christian wife, by a

bond which makes those two, whatever becomes of the earthly tie, partakers of a common immortality; of an inheritance which they may share together or forfeit together, or one may retain and the other lose, but the rights and responsibilities of which have become so entwined and incorporated with the very elements of their spiritual being that death itself cannot extinguish them. Their inheritance—if only they do not themselves lose it—is for ever; and shall not their union be for ever likewise? Their inheritance is only in prospect and anticipation here; it is enjoyed by faith and hope; they watch for it, strive for it, look forward to it together. They stand together and fight for it in that great army of God which wars incessantly against the world, the flesh, and the devil; they stand beside each other in the hour of battle, amid the darkness and confusion of the fight; they sustain and encourage one another to the very hour in which the warfare is accomplished; and shall they separate and become strangers for ever when the rewards of victory are bestowed? Shall they share together the doubt and not the certainty, all the danger and none of the triumph? Shall they know and love and aid each other throughout the weary struggle, and not enjoy in common the glory and the coming rest?

There is a passage in St. Augustine that bears

so strongly on this view, and is itself of such singular beauty, that I cannot forbear quoting it before I conclude. It is where he is relating his last conversation with his mother—that mother to whom, under God, he owed his soul as well as his natural life—a few days before her death ; and this was their parting discourse :—

"The day now approaching whereon she was to depart this life, it came to pass that she and I stood alone leaning in a certain window, which looked into the garden of the house where we now lay at Ostia ; where, removed from the din of men, we were recruiting from the fatigues of a long journey, for the voyage. We were discoursing then together alone, very sweetly ; and forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were inquiring between ourselves in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man. But yet we gasped with the mouth of our heart after those heavenly streams of Thy fountain, the fountain of life which is with Thee ; that being bedewed thence, according to our capacity, we might in some sort meditate upon so high a mystery. . . .

"We were saying then : if to any the tumult of

the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth and waters and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self, surmount self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatsoever exists only in transition,—since, if any could hear, all these say 'We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever.' If then having uttered this, they too should be hushed, having roused only our ears to Him who made them, and He alone speak, not by them, but by Himself, that we may hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh nor angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear Him whom in these things we love—might hear His very self without these (as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that eternal wisdom, which abideth over all)—could this be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish and absorb and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which we sighed after—were not this, 'Enter into Thy Master's joy'?

"Such things was I speaking; and in that day when we were speaking of these things, and this

world, with all its delights, became as we spake contemptible to us, my mother said: 'Son, for mine own part, I have no further delight in anything in this life. What I do here any longer, and to what end I am here, I know not, now that my hopes in this world are accomplished. One thing there was for which I desired to linger for a while in this life, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath done this for me more abundantly, that I should now see thee, withal despising earthly happiness, become His servant: what do I here?'"

It was thus they spoke together for the last time on earth—only on earth; for we cannot indeed believe that those who thus thought and thus spoke, and seemed to taste together of things most heavenly on the dim confines of time, and were so united in God, were not to enjoy a more perfect and rapturous intercourse when those boundaries were passed for ever. We cannot believe that God would enable them thus almost to realise heaven on earth, and divide them only when they reached it.

5. And I might still add other proofs. I might show how the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body—the very fact of our future identity, that we are to be our own selves, and not something different from ourselves—in-

volves of necessity the recognition of those whom we have known and mingled with here on earth. For what are we apart from them? Or what is our whole life, with all the good and evil in it, made up of; all our thoughts, words, and deeds; all our feelings, affections, judgments, principles; all our hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows,—what is the best and worst part of our earthly history, but that which unites us with others? Is not our character, in every aspect of it, so interwoven with them that to eradicate the memory of those we love would be to destroy our own identity—to forget them would be to forget ourselves?

And should it be thought that future recognition, if it be a blessed hope, is marred by one fearful condition; that it implies the knowledge not only of those to whom we are united for ever, but of those from whom we are for ever separated; that if it be full of joy, it is also full of awe and apprehension,—if this be urged, what shall we say? There is but one answer to give: it rests with God. No doubt the consequence does seem to us to follow from the doctrine; we cannot solve the difficulty it offers. But He can. In this, as in all other great questions which beset us, we are ultimately led to rest in faith. May we not trust to divine wisdom and divine goodness to find a way of reconciling what is beyond our narrow

capacity? May we not, at least, trust that He who gives the hope will in the end perfect it for us without alloy?

Yes, He has given the hope, and what a hope that is! "He delivered him to his mother." O unspeakable joy, next to the bliss of the Beatific Vision, when His divine hands shall reunite those whom death had parted—unite to part or change no more!

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

VI

THE VISION OF CHRIST

"Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off."—Isa. xxxiii. 17.

To whatever extent these words may be realised in the Church on earth, there can be no doubt that they wait for their perfect fulfilment in the future. For what is that land very far off of which they speak but the glory of all lands, the heavenly country, where is the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem; a land where the sun shall no more go down, neither the moon withdraw itself, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shall be the light thereof? And who is the King that shall be seen in His beauty but He who is King of kings and Lord of lords; of whom it is written, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion;" and again, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom"? He it is who is fairer than the children of men, and alto-

gether lovely; and of Him St. Peter says to faithful Christians, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And if this be so now, what shall it be when they do see Him?

Of all the senses sight affords us the largest, the most perfect, and the purest fruition. By this marvellous faculty we seem to take actual possession of what we behold. To see what we desire is to enjoy it. It comes nearer than voice or touch; we inwardly embrace and hold it. The eyes dwell on, run over it, feast and are satisfied. What is the single wish of those who have been long separated but to see one another once again? What was the exclamation of Jacob when he heard that his beloved and long-lost son was still living? "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." When the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's glory—type as that was of something infinitely higher—"There was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it." When Simeon beheld the infant Saviour in the Temple, he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant

depart in peace. . . . For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." To the pure in heart it is promised that they shall see God. When our Lord prayed for His elect before His Passion, He said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." And St. John says, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." To see Him, then, is the final consummation of all. There is nothing more held out to man, as nothing higher could be. For this great vision our whole life here is but a preparation. This is the end of creation, the end of redemption, the end of struggle and victory. They to whom it is vouchsafed will have reached the greatest height and the most perfect bliss that any creature can attain.

But it is not only said, "Thine eyes shall see the King," but "they shall see the King in his beauty." What is this expression intended to convey? Surely the word has been given for our devout meditation; and if we do so with becoming reverence, we may try, as far as our imperfect faculties allow, to penetrate its meaning.

And here, at the very outset, we are met by a

mystery in the idea which this term represents. For what is beauty itself? Or what do we understand about it, even in its most earthly manifestations? The more you think of it, the harder you will find it to tell. You can point to various instances of what is outwardly beautiful, in shape and proportion, in light and shade, in form, colour, motion; but what is that beauty itself in which they all share? It is a subtle influence reaching to the inner depths of the nature, touching, as it were, the springs of some of our purest emotions, which respond to it as the instrument to the master's hand. It attracts, soothes, rejoices, elevates. It can tame the rudest nature and kindle light in the dullest eyes; it conquers without strife or violence. When we say that beauty fascinates, we only use a term which implies that its powers are all a mystery. What is it? What is the source and secret of its charm? Now, if we find it difficult to give an answer to such questions as these, it only teaches us with how deep a sense of our own incapacity we should approach such an inquiry as that which is suggested by the text. Let us begin with what is near at hand, and thus try, step by step, as children try their strength, to ascend higher.

1. First, then, we are so framed by God as to experience delight in the contemplation of objects which we term beautiful. Take, for instance, the

beauties of nature, as they are called. Though we are fallen creatures, and the world in which we live is fallen too, there is this unmistakable element of our original constitution still remaining. With dimmed vision and burdened heart man can snatch from the faded loveliness of a sin-stained earth moments of refreshment that make him purer and stronger for the task he has to perform here. Who does not feel this? Who does not take pleasure in form and colour? Who does not love to look at a green field or a garden of flowers; at a clump of trees, or a stream of water gliding and sparkling through the thickness of overhanging leaves? Which of us has not been sometimes drawn away from busy or anxious thoughts, to look at an evening sky when the sun went down amidst piles of clouds that glowed and glittered as if they were mountains of jewels, or the far-off pinnacles of the golden city? Where do young and old, rich and poor, all whose hearts are not wholly poisoned and perverted, hasten to enjoy a summer holiday? To the country—to God's country. To stand upon the shore of the sea which He has made; to look upon the hills which He has made; to tread upon the tender grass which He has spread beneath their feet; to feast with gladdened hearts on sights ever new yet ever the same; on which the young open

their eyes with wonder and a strange joy, and which alone bring back to the old the freshness and feelings of youth. In this respect there is less difference than we might suppose between the extremes of life—between the rudest and the most cultivated minds. We are made for this joy; it is part of our original nature. The more complicated arrangements of natural beauty—the rich and varied landscape with its sweep of hill and vale, its shadow of wood and cloud—may afford to the educated sense a keener delight; but the poor workman who leans over a gate on Sunday, and looks out upon fields and hedges, has the essence of it all within him if he could only tell out his thoughts.

But though we cannot explain why we call these things beautiful, except that we are so framed as to derive enjoyment from them, we can discover to some extent *how* they affect us with pleasurable emotions. And it seems to be this. They do not allow us to rest in them; they raise us to something above and beyond themselves. Thus, the beauty of nature sometimes affects us from its great repose. Perhaps this is one of the commonest ways in which we feel it. Isaac went out into the fields to meditate at eventide. We have all done the same. Men, tired by the din and whirl of busy life, the conflict of interests, the

pressure of cares, are often unspeakably soothed by the quietness of fields and sky. God's great works are so still and tranquil, even in their progress, moving, yet without noise or collision, none breaking their ranks, while man and his world are in a state of ceaseless disquietude and agitation. And so they tell us of an order that reigns above confusion and a peace that abides in the midst of strife. And nature is so constant compared with the changefulness of man. Man is always changing his feelings, aims, pursuits; he never continueth in one stay. Nature remains the same still; that grass is springing, those trees put on their leaves, the flowers bud and the water flows, no matter how much ourselves and the whole human world about us are altered. A few years pass over; the people, the houses, the times are gone or changed; we can never bring them back to what they were. That little space has marred many things that once were very fair; fair faces, fair promises, fair hopes, but not the fair beauty of nature; for there are the everlasting hills with the same tints of youth, the same light upon their brows—there are the trees and meadows with the same fresh green they ever wore. They bring home to us a sense of permanence amid universal change, and almost necessarily awaken thoughts of Him with whom is no variableness, neither

shadow of turning. Its charm is like that of good-humour, rebuking moroseness and discontent, and imparting a taste of its own sweetness to the mind that comes into contact with it. The delight which nature affords us does not terminate in the material object on which we look. It is connected with the thought or feeling which that object seems to express, either directly or by association. And this view is implied in the very forms of speech that are used to describe the effects which the objects of nature produce upon the mind,—as when we talk of having sympathy with nature, holding communion with nature, nay, even of the language of nature; or when, borrowing images from our own mental emotions, we speak of an angry ocean, a frowning sky, a smiling prospect, or a peaceful landscape.

You see then how the beauty even of inanimate nature affects us. It speaks to something in us higher than all our senses. It is not the eye alone that is gratified in dwelling upon the harmony of form or colour, but a thought seems to detach itself from them and pass to the inward soul. They appeal to the spiritual nature. As music delights the ear, and yet does not rest in the outward organ, but passing inwards, sweeps through the chambers of the soul, awakening echoes of thought and feeling more harmonious than any

sound, so is it with nature. She is striving to tell us of something better and nobler than herself —higher than anything we can see; and it is the expression of this, the thought breathing from her face, which makes it so beautiful to us. The eye indeed derives its sensible pleasure from the material object, for it is framed to do so; but something far lovelier reaches the inward sense—something that we recognise as the beauty shrouded within the visible beauty—its very core and life.

2. If this is true, we may advance another step towards the import of this word "beauty" in the text. I have spoken of it in its simplest aspect as it is connected with inanimate nature: let us now look at it as an attribute of the living form. The beauty of humanity transcends all other beauty, and in the human countenance God has, as it were, sealed up the sum of its perfection. There is nothing in visible nature, in earth or sky, so beautiful to look upon as a beautiful face. The feeling is common to man everywhere and at all times; and it is a holy feeling. The admiration inspired by earthly beauty has something very sacred and mysterious in it, as all our deeper emotions have; although for us, who know the truth of the incarnation, the union of our nature with the divine in the person of Christ, the mystery is cleared. But the question now is:

What is it that awakens the feeling; in what does this beauty of the human countenance consist? Is beauty the outline of faultless features, or the perfect combination and harmony of the whole? Can we define and measure it, explain it in all its details, and reduce it within the compass of mechanical rules? Assuredly not. The mere mould and form of the countenance do not constitute beauty; they are at best no more than its conditions, while the attribute itself is of a far subtler nature, and its source lies wholly beyond them. Where then is it to be found?

In answer to this question it may be said that the soul is the real source of beauty, revealing itself through the features. This is true, and, as far as it goes, a marvellous truth if we try to master it. The human soul is that which gives beauty to the human face: the invisible makes the visible beautiful; or rather, it is the invisible which really attracts us while we look on the visible. What a mystery is here, and what a seeming paradox! The face which we actually see with our eyes, each of whose lineaments may be closely scanned and analysed, derives all its real beauty from what we nevertheless cannot see; or rather, indeed, is beautiful only so far as it discovers to us what it also veils, namely, the soul within. It has no beauty by reason of that beauty

which excelleth. The fairest features are fair only as they help to show us something fairer still. And as, with respect to nature, I said that it is the expression of what is spiritual which seizes us, so is it with the human countenance; its beauty is, after all, but the faint and feeble expression of what is hidden from the eye, and what no eye could look upon. It is like the reflection cast by some object, itself unseen; or as if we were to witness the silent shadows of some magnificent procession, whose glories, as they were displayed in the distant sunshine, were invisible to us.

But here we are met by another question. When we thus speak of the soul as the true source of beauty in the human face, what are we to understand by the soul? In which of its various aspects do we regard it? For instance, the soul is the principle of life within us—is it in this respect that it imparts beauty to the face? Are the living features merely, as contrasted with the lifeless, beautiful? Or, again, the soul is the principle which thinks—is the expression of intelligence beauty? Is it the shining forth of the mind, the character of thought impressed upon the features, which gives them this mysterious attraction? We shall scarcely say so. No doubt the expression of thought, being the revelation of a higher nature—not to say that it asserts the

supremacy of that nature over the lower one, and so far possesses a moral character—partakes of beauty, or is an element in it; but that it is not that true source of beauty after which we are now inquiring will appear, if you merely consider this: Is intellect any security against moral evil? May not high intellectual powers be perverted to a bad purpose, or may they not be wholly inadequate to the task of controlling the passions? As a matter of fact, are what are called intellectual persons, as a class, more distinguished than others for moral goodness? Nay, further, may not a very intellectual countenance, in spite of its power, betray a weak or corrupt heart? and is not a single sinister trait of pride, or sensuality, or cruelty, or deceit, or meanness—nay, even of moral weakness—enough to mar the brightest intelligence that ever illuminated the most faultless features? And if so—if moral evil of any and every kind is incompatible with beauty, and even destructive of it—if these two cannot exist together, then intellect cannot be the source of beauty, because there is no incompatibility between its presence and the presence of moral evil in the same countenance.

What, then, is that aspect or attribute of the human soul from which outward beauty springs? It is not life only, as we have seen, nor mind, nor intellectual power. What is it? To answer

this question we have only to consider what is the characteristic attribute of the soul itself—that which is supreme over all others, which is inseparable from it, and belongs to its very essence. To us Christians, at any rate, the reply is at hand. That which distinguishes the soul and makes it to be what it is, is its moral nature. Man was first created in the image of God, and when he lost it the Son of God became incarnate in order to restore it; and that image the Scripture describes as consisting in righteousness and true holiness. The central attribute of the soul, then, is its moral character, and in this at last we find the source of outward beauty. In a word, it is goodness, and goodness alone, which sheds this divine lustre which men call beauty over the countenance. And if we needed further confirmation of the fact, we have only to remember that while, as I said just now, one trace of evil blights the fairest face, on the other hand, goodness alone can almost transfigure it, sometimes triumphing over the outward form, and imparting to common or even homely features a dignity, a grace, a charm, which nothing else could bestow.

We have then reached this point. We find from the outset that beauty touches us not by form only, but by expression; the beauty of the outer world in the expression of thought or feeling;

the beauty of the human face in the expression of the soul's moral nature. And what is expression? It is the revelation of the higher nature through the lower—the effort of the lower nature to be its organ and interpreter; it is the struggle of the material to lift itself up, to reach after and unite itself to what is spiritual; and where they meet the result is beauty. A beautiful face is that which reveals most clearly the true soul within—that adaptation and harmony of all the features most suited to express its beauty; and the beauty of the soul consists in moral goodness. Beauty as it is in the soul is hidden from us. We cannot see it; it is only faint shadows and glimpses that reach us through the veil of the flesh. We cannot see truth, sincerity, integrity, self-control, patience, courage, love, pity, tenderness, nobleness of nature. We can only see, in the mould and motion of the features, in the play of expression, in the glance of the eye, their faint and imperfect reflection—that is all. Visible beauty ends here.

And now, what follows? If sight be the most perfect and spiritual of the senses, and the contemplation of what we call beauty—but which, as I have shown, is only its shadow—be the most perfect enjoyment of sight, what must the manifestation of beauty itself be? If the beauty of

the face be such, what must be the beauty of the soul that lights it? If the mere shadows be so lovely, what indescribable loveliness must there be in the substance? Think of this. How beautiful must a beautiful soul be, when the highest perfection of the most perfect countenance is due to this, that it discovers to us weak traces of the beauty within! What must that beauty be? Not the outlines, the faint, tremulous touches, the tints and colours, but the substantial reality! What must be the beauty of the soul of the saint in which dwells love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; which is conversant about "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report"; where, under the plastic powers of the divine spirit, the restored image of God is emerging gradually but surely out of all darkness and defilement, the old man dying out and the new man coming forth in the likeness of Christ—feature for feature, and grace for grace?

I pause here. We have reached the limits of creature beauty. Dare we advance higher? Nature is beautiful because it reveals thought; the human face is more beautiful because it reveals that moral goodness of which thought is only a condition; the soul is more beautiful, for in it dwells the goodness that lights the countenance;

but all these, and the highest of them all, are but dim and broken reflections of a beauty which is beyond and above all, as it is the source of all. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." To see the King in His beauty is to see the beauty of His glorified humanity taken for ever into the Godhead. It is to see that form which the Son of God took to Himself in the womb of the Virgin, bore while He dwelt on earth, raised from the grave, ascended with into heaven, and in which He now stands at the right hand of the Father. It is to see with the eyes the perfect manhood of God incarnate; it is to see the face of God; it is to see with the soul the beauty from which it derives any beauty—the beauty of holiness, of purity, of truth, of love, of mercy, of justice, of wisdom, of all perfection. It is to see this, not through cloud, or in vision, or broken by any medium, but as directly as it is possible for the creature to see the uncreated. It is for the soul to see by participation, to see the more the more it partakes; to bathe in the abysses of that glory, beholding and becoming itself beautiful in beholding, even as the light of the sun imparts its light to the object it falls upon, and glorifies that on which it shines. But to reach this hereafter it must begin for each of us here. It is the condemnation pronounced upon the world by the

prophet—when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. That cross in which the world saw shame and consummated its rejection of Him, is the power that wins and transforms the Christian soul. It is there that Christ reveals His beauty first to the penitent soul—first and last too. The cross, borne for us each, becomes the abiding cross within us. He to whom Christ manifests Himself can desire no other beauty; and that vision changes the soul. As in His grace He makes us to partake of His image, so, and so only, do we become able to see Him. May He grant to us all an abundant measure of this grace now, that we may be fitted to behold Him in His beauty hereafter!

VII

RIZPAH

"And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."—2 SAM. xxi. 10.

WHY, it may be asked, was the chapter in which this passage occurs chosen, rather than another, to occupy a place in one of our Sunday services? In answer to the question, I will remind you of a few of the lessons which the narrative in the chapter suggests, before I go on to dwell more particularly on the subject of the text.

1. And first: this chapter contains the last notice of Saul that occurs in the Old Testament history. And a sad and solemn one it is. Far back in the narrative we first meet with Saul, as a young man, chosen by God out of all the tribes and families of Israel to rule His people as their king. We see him at once put upon his trial (as all are, each in his own way), twice disobedient,

and then losing God's favour, the kingdom, and his own life. But the mention of him in this chapter goes a step farther. While life lasts men can in most cases do something to repair the evil they have committed, and even where this is beyond remedy, there is still at least a hope of their own repentance; but when the time of repentance has passed, and the consequences of a man's sin discover themselves after his death, we read one of the most awful lessons the whole course of Providence supplies. It appears that Saul had dealt cruelly and treacherously in seeking to exterminate the Gibeonites, whom the children of Israel had on their first reduction of Canaan sworn to spare. Time passed on; Saul died, and David reigned in his place. The whole transaction, an attempt to destroy a tribe of miserable bondmen, had probably been long forgotten. Then suddenly there came a divine visitation. For three successive years the country was scourged by a famine, till David at length inquired of the Lord, and was told, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

And Saul's inducement to this cruel measure is also full of warning. What led him to adopt it? It was his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah. Now when we look back to the circum-

stances under which Saul was raised to the throne, we find that in him God had given the Israelites a king after their own heart. He was God's choice, but he was their choice too. "Behold," said Samuel to the assembled people, "the king whom ye have chosen and whom ye have desired!"[1] And as they had chosen him, so was his character in thorough sympathy with theirs. As they had rejected God when they chose him, so he rejected God in order to gratify them. It was to please the people that he disobeyed God. This was the occasion of his repeated fall. His excuse for intruding into the priest's office instead of waiting for Samuel, was that he "saw that the people were scattered" from him ;[2] his excuse for sparing Agag and the Amalekite spoil was that he "feared the people."[3] And the same error which marked his life, still forms his memorial after death. Surely this view of the unity of a character in its obstinate adherence to a single vice is deeply instructive. Saul had early tasted the bitter fruit of courting popularity by the sacrifice of duty, and yet it is his record to the very last. He began by disobeying God to conciliate man, and ended in the guilt of treachery and bloodshed still incurred to gain favour with the people.

[1] 1 Sam. xii. 13.
[2] 1 Sam. xiii. 11. [3] 1 Sam. xv. 24.

did not belong to her. Or if, on the other hand, it should be her own lot to outlive them, then everything she has felt and done for them goes for nothing. As far as this world is concerned she has laboured in vain, and spent her strength for nought. This is the end of all. So it was with her of whom the text speaks. She saw her sons die—die by a sudden and awful death, bearing on it the special stamp of a divine judgment. She saw their remains cast forth to accomplish the mysterious expiation, and she follows them still. There they lie, exposed and deserted by all others, but love is there to keep its enduring watch. Everything else is forsaken for this. That rock is now her world—that bare rock with its silent company. She has no other home on earth now. She is with her children still, as she was when they hung first upon her breast. She has seen all out—the beginning and the end ; the first look and the last ; the bud and the fallen fruit. She had once watched in patient love over their helpless infancy, and now she watches them in a more helpless hour. Perhaps some visions of requital to come may have mingled with her dreams as she gazed with loving eyes on those infant faces where neither passion nor thought, the influences of the outer world nor the collision with men, had yet traced a line ; she may have

dreamed—as mothers will ever dream—of all they would be in the future ; of goodness and bravery, honour and high place among their fellows ; almost unconsciously she may have pictured herself in the light of their reflected glory, and heard the music of their praises float around the vision as something that was half her own. But this is all over now. There are no more dreams for her ; no more anticipations of joy or triumph ; no more requitals of a mother's care. The future has come and gone ; how short a story ! An age in prospect, a moment to look back upon. Childhood passed swiftly into youth, and youth ripened to a strong and stormy manhood, and then came the sudden and dreadful end, closing up all. There is nothing to look forward to now, nothing left. The worst has come upon her,—that last earthly ill for which there is neither remedy nor hope. If she had been called to tend them through long and pining sickness ; if she had to bear the anguish of a deathbed watching, even this might have been alleviated by look or touch. Ah, if she might even now see those expressionless lips but once unclose, those sealed-up eyes open, those frozen features relax with one gleam of recognition ! But no : the childless mother sits down beside her dead sons under the profound consciousness of her vast bereavement, with no support but the love

which has brought her there, and asks for nothing on earth now but to be left to its solitary watch. And surely this tender, enduring constancy, this devotedness to death and beyond it, belongs more to woman's share of our nature than to man's. Men begin after a time to take what they call a rational and philosophic view of their bereavement. They return to the world; they resume their occupations; their interest is again awakened by the business and cares of life. It is a providential remedy indeed both to the individual and to society; but so it is. Neither are men insensible, nor do they forget the objects of their love. No; man comes from the chamber of mourning graver and more thoughtful, and the impression abides. He even refuses to form new ties in life, and continues to dwell alone. He lives, bearing within him, but keeping down, a great pain. But the world contains many objects, many interests to engage him, and the daily round goes on. It is not so with woman. The blow that falls within her narrow sphere smites finally; she sits on the shore from which the vessel that carries her earthly all has launched; she sits there heedless now of time or change, of sun or storm; she ever looks with straining eyes across that mysterious ocean till her own hour comes, and she follows those with whom her heart has always been.

And this leads us to another aspect of love which the text discovers—its fearlessness. Love is not only devoted but fearless; and in the present instance we see its courage put to the severest proof, inasmuch as it triumphs over the natural timidity and weakness of woman. So sparing, indeed, are the words of Scripture, that we do not at first discern the full extent of the trial by which this mother's constancy was tested, and it is only in dwelling on those words that it opens out to view in all its dreadful proportions. For consider what we are told so simply: "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." This is all that is said, yet how much is implied in these few plain words! I need not remind you of the entire absence of all those ordinary palliatives of affliction which, though they cannot of themselves mitigate a great woe, may still be missed by the sufferer. She had no friend or companion to stand by her and offer the sympathy of word or look. She was alone upon that rock, without shelter too, exposed to vicissitudes which even Jacob, a hardy shepherd, counted among the sufferings he had undergone

in his service with Laban: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."[1] Yet all this was the least part of what she had to endure. Solitude, privations, and hardship may be disregarded in the presence of some absorbing interest, but there are instincts and fears in our nature from which no abstraction can secure us. Think of the objects that surrounded her as she watched there, and the terrors with which she must have been beset. By day the ravenous birds flocking together, hovering over her head, almost touching her as they grew bolder, the wind from their wings driven against her, their harsh screams sounding in her ears; by night the wild beasts drawing near at the scent of death; savage eyes glaring on her through the darkness; nameless shapes of terror creeping closer and closer; the oppressive sense of a danger and horror she could not distinguish, could not shake off, could not defend herself against; the dreadful thought that at a moment she might find herself entangled in a mortal struggle to preserve those poor relics from mutilation; and then, her companions throughout—the dead; silent, helpless, awful, alas, even to love.

And it was a woman who confronted this.

[1] Gen. xxxi. 40.

Could the brain bear it, or the natural strength hold out? And yet the worst perhaps was still to come. For they whom she watched with such surpassing courage and tenderness—to watch whom she had left all the world, whose remains she might protect from the violence of beast or bird, and would save from outrage at the risk of life—they must nevertheless be torn from her by a more resistless power. She came to protect them from dishonour and desecration, and yet it is only to witness with her own eyes the last dishonour of mortality which no earthly power can arrest. She must see that from which love itself recoils; that which made the Patriarch crave a spot where he might bury his dead out of his sight;[1] that which causes men to hide quickly in the earth all that is left of what they love, even though they leave their own hearts with it. Yes, she came to watch the dead, and she must witness that from which human nature recoils shuddering as more terrible than death itself. She cannot even keep them with her as they are. Day by day they must change before her eyes. The calm of death when the great struggle is over; that inexpressible majesty which rests upon the face, and fills even the thoughtless with reverence; that beauty as of a twilight without sound, when

[1] Gen. xxiii. 4.

all the fevered tumult of the day is past, quickly disappears. Then comes the darkness. She saw it all: the changed colour—the disfigured features—the lineaments, stained, sunk, trampled, vanishing—the progress of decay with all its humiliating and dreadful circumstances, so rarely seen, and which it would serve no purpose now to dwell upon. Yet she had to bear this; and she went through the trial. She watched them from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven.

Such is the strength and energy of human love. Let us now look at it in one aspect more—that of its helplessness. This is the last impression that the text leaves on us, and surely the most marvellous—the utter helplessness of love. All that courage and constancy, that devotion, tenderness, endurance, self-sacrifice, lavished in vain! She may watch, and protect, and cling to them; she may pour out the untold treasures of affection in tending their unconscious remains, but the work of dissolution must go on the same as if they lay there forsaken. She cannot stay it even for a moment. And this is the end of all mortal love if this world were all. And did she then bear them and bring them up for this—that she should see them fade away before her very eyes, that she should herself witness the havoc of

decay, that she should look on the dear and so familiar features, and be no longer able to recognise them? Is this indeed the end, and are they lost to her for ever? Are these poor mouldering limbs, this unsightly clay, all that is left of life, and strength, and beauty—all that is left of those whom she loves still with such enduring faith? Is there to be no meeting—no day ever to dawn that will wipe away the memory of this her great woe, and recompense all her sufferings? O that the surrounding sky would open and grant one gleam of the future; that some voice would break this dreadful aching silence and tell what is yet to be! Or did her thoughts in that hour stay themselves on such hopes as might be gathered even from the records of an earlier dispensation? Did she think of Abraham, to whom God restored his son again when he was the same as dead;[1] of Joseph, the beloved child of Jacob, lost for so many years, mourned as one dead, and yet found again, and under circumstances that more than balanced all past sorrow; of Moses, exposed as an infant on the waters, and yet by so wonderful a Providence given back to his own mother? We cannot tell. The silence of Scripture falls like a heavy veil around the mourner and her calamities. Her love and sorrow are set before

[1] Gen. xxii.

us in their strong outlines; the rest remains untold.

And now, before I conclude, I will mention two or three of those practical lessons which may be drawn from the subject before us.

1. We have been hitherto contemplating an instance of human love, and to what do such instances naturally lead the mind? I do not ask what we Christians, with the light which God has given us, may gather from them, but what might even they learn who lived under a former dispensation, and before our Saviour's coming had cleared up the mysteries of man's nature and destiny? Surely the very existence of love seems to indicate at once the character of Him from whom it comes, in whom it dwells, and who has thus framed and endowed our nature to be a present witness and revelation of Himself. For if not, what is its meaning? The outward world bears witness to God's power and wisdom; the blessings He bestows tell us of His goodness and mercy; and has the inner world of our own nature, in spite of its disorders, no voice too? Or rather, as the former makes God known to us by His outward acts, does not the latter reveal Him to us even more surely by the sympathies and affinities of our own spiritual nature? What, for instance, does the love of parent or friend teach

but the love of Him who has not only given to us these relations, but in the very love they show, affords us intimations and pledges of His own? He is the true Father and Friend in whom is the reality and perfection of those relations which exist here. All the acts and manifestations of their love are at best but dim and distant shadows of that Love whose fulness dwells in Him. Yet what a thought is this to those who try to apprehend it! We see what earthly love is—how constant and strong, how patient and courageous, how tender and self-devoted; yet this is only the love of a creature—weak, sinful, ignorant, helpless. What must be the love of Him whose wisdom, power, and holiness are infinite as His love? It is the very reasoning which He Himself condescends to employ with His people of old: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."[1]

2. Again: if the love of creatures thus reveals to us the love of God who made them, so does it also teach that God alone is the true object and rest of a creature's love. This is another lesson which we may gather from the text. When we look at the capabilities and resources of love; when we see, as in the case before us, its utter

[1] Isa. xlix. 15.

self-renunciation, its insensibility to the common wants of nature, its disregard of danger, its indifference to objects most terrible to the imagination ; how it raises the entire nature, making even the weak victorious among trials under which the strongest often sink : need we ask whether such an affection as this, which seems incapable of limit or exhaustion, can find its proper object on the earth ? Does that desolate mother, watching in the fulness of her love beside her dead sons—yet utterly helpless—represent the true end and accomplishment of this affection ; or rather, is not the sight itself an evidence that qualities so great and so enduring cannot exist in vain ; that there must be for love some object suited to it, worthy of it, in which it may find the rest that nothing here can give ; that it was made for One who cannot injure or deceive, cannot disappoint or change, cannot fail or die ; One to whom it may surrender itself without distrust or dread wholly and for ever ? Yes, love not only leads us back to God as its source, but forward to Himself as its end. It will not suffer us to pause at any intermediate object. All creatures whom it meets on the way, and attempts to cling to, fail ; everything points it upwards ; there is no other hope for it but to struggle on to Him ; no peace or rest anywhere till it finds Him.

3. Once again—though I will but touch on it now—love seems to suggest to us what has indeed its fulfilment only in that dispensation which has brought life and immortality to light, —I mean the restoration of individual attachments hereafter. Love, I say, would seem to contain a pledge of this, that those whom it unites here, though separated for a little while by death, will, if found fit for it, be reunited permanently hereafter. Shall those hands be stretched out to heaven always empty? Shall those eyes never again see the loved and unforgotten face? Shall that heart bear within it ever one unhealed wound? Surely no; even earthly love, if only subordinated to the love of God, seems to bear within it the elements of perpetuity, and in order to the completion of our nature, to plead for its own fulfilment. But that plea is sealed to us in Him who was born of a woman, in the Incarnation of our Lord. That God should have united to Himself our nature for ever, imparts to all that essentially belongs to that nature, as this affection does, a permanence at which we may well be awed, while we rejoice; not merely the immortality of the creature, but even a share in the eternity of God.

VIII

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—GAL. vi. 14.

THE first word that needs explanation in this verse is the term "glorying." It implies possession, or at least personal interest, in the object in which we glory. No man can glory in what is the property of another, from which he derives neither honour nor advantage. But in addition to owning or having an interest in what we glory in, we must also set the highest value on it. We cannot glory in every object that we prize or find useful. We may think much of a thing, find it necessary to us, and yet it may be quite impossible for us to glory in it. What we glory in must have a distinct special value in our eyes above all other things, for this reason: because to glory in an object is not merely to prize but to admire, not merely to admire it, but to have a sort

of glowing and passionate admiration for it, to have it constantly before us and uppermost in our thoughts, to take pride and pleasure in dwelling upon it, talking of it, displaying it before others,—making it our *boast*, in fact, which is the basis of the word employed by St. Paul here.

We have all, I suppose, met with instances of this. When a man glories, for example, in his strength or his intellectual gifts, or in his riches, or his family, or his station, or even in anything rare or valuable which he happens to possess, he is unable to contain himself, and it is impossible for you to be in that man's company without knowing what he glories in. If he was only satisfied with or valued these things very much, you might never know it, but because he glories in them he tells you so, and he cannot help it. And it does not make any difference if other people think little of what he glories in ; he does not care. Nay, he is even ready to expose himself to ridicule from the disproportion between the object in which he glories and the feelings with which he regards it. For he has reached that point where the feeling itself is quite independent of the opinion of others, or is only driven by opposition into greater excess. This is what St. Paul means when he speaks in the text of glorying in the cross of Christ. He speaks of boasting and exultation. He had got

beyond submitting to the cross, beyond accepting it, beyond confessing it, beyond loving it. He could not repress or hide his transporting and triumphant joy. He therefore gloried in it. The word, you see, expresses a powerful, predominant, and enthusiastic feeling.

The next word we meet in the text is the word "cross." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the object that St. Paul gloried in. Now no two ideas could be more diametrically opposed, more contradictory to each other at the time when St. Paul wrote, than these two which he here brings together, glory and the cross. It would, indeed, be quite impossible for us, living in this age of the world and brought up as Christians, to form any adequate conception of the antagonism between these notions—the cross and glory—in St. Paul's days. So great was it that the very attempt to illustrate it now by any comparisons taken from what we are familiar with would fail, because it could not be made distinctly without allusions that would shock the feelings. You must remember that to glory in the cross at that time was to glory in what was at issue with the world at every point; and it was to boast of this antagonism, thus incurring all the obloquy and danger attached to the side which he had taken. Just

consider what the cross must have brought with it then. Our blessed Lord had been publicly rejected by the whole Jewish nation—priests, rulers, and people, Scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians—and delivered into the hands of the heathen governor to suffer the worst death of the worst criminal. They had never afterwards repented of their rejection of Him, but, on the contrary, extended it into a fierce and relentless persecution of His followers from their first proclamation of their mission on the day of Pentecost. They had beaten and imprisoned the apostles, had stoned St. Stephen to death, and scattered the disciples from the cradle of the first church at Jerusalem. They had employed St. Paul himself as the missionary of persecution, and at the time when our Lord appeared to him from heaven and arrested him in his course, he was on the way to Damascus, to bring the disciples who were there bound to Jerusalem to suffer. Their hatred to St. Paul was displayed through all his after-life, and would be intensely aggravated by the fact that he had been their own associate, and now appeared in the double character of an apostle of Christ and a traitor to the cause to which all the vehemence of their mistaken zeal was pledged. To glory in the cross was therefore a daring or audacious challenge to the religion of the entire

nation, to the passions of the mob, to the vindictive recollections of his own former associates, who saw in his person an agent transformed into an antagonist. For a Jew to do this was not merely to abandon religion, country, friends, social ties, all old bonds and companionships, and to stand alone—this might be done quietly and unobtrusively perhaps by one who believed only—but to glory in the cross was to boast of what caused the separation, and make that his pride; to declare war against the popular religion of his countrymen, and to charge them with the awful crime of having rejected and crucified their Lord.

So much for the Jewish world then. Now as to the Gentiles. The Greek and Roman despised the barbarian Jew, mocked his obscure superstition not worthy of investigation, and would pour a more accumulated scorn upon one belonging to such a nation who should presume to propose himself as their teacher in anything worth learning. Conceive the contempt, the disgust, the indignation, the rage, that would follow when a Jew actually proposed to Gentiles—to Roman governors, to the emperor's household, to Athenian citizens, to Greek philosophers—one of his own nation, a Jewish mechanic, who had suffered as a malefactor, not as King of the Jews only, but as Lord of the whole world; as risen from the dead,

seated at the right hand of God, and to be the future Judge of all mankind who were to stand before Him and receive their sentence. Think, I say, of a Jew glorying in presence of the whole Gentile world, with its huge and intricate systems of religious policy rooted deep in the life of the various nations, and spreading above so as to shut out the light of heaven; glorying in being the follower of One who had died the death of the cross, by the sentence of a Roman magistrate; glorying in that very death itself, the sum of earthly shame and suffering; declaring Him who had so suffered to be the Ruler of heaven and earth, and claiming for Him the present submission of all people, nations, and languages, to whom the announcement should come. This is something of what was meant by glorying in the cross at that time. And for a man to do this was to stand out in solitary protest against all Gentile religions, against all beliefs and philosophies, against all inbred habits, all popular opinions and prejudices, against the entire complicated life of the Gentile as well as of the Jewish world.

This, then, was what St. Paul did, and this was the object in which he gloried. But he goes further still. He goes even a step beyond glorying in the cross. For he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ."

That is, he not only glories in the cross but he glories in it in preference, and to the exclusion of every other kind of glory, whatever that might be. Observe this too. Men may glory in more things than one, and in one thing more than another, without rejecting the lesser objects of glory. St. Paul gloried in one thing, rejecting and spurning, as it were, every other claimant. He gloried in the cross, and he gloried in it above everything else that could be named, and he gloried in it alone. He looked upon every other object as worthless and despicable in presence of this one, renouncing them in the strongest form, and repelling the mere thought of glorying in them as he would repel some base temptation. God forbid, "far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now comes the question, How was St. Paul brought to this? I do not mean, By what presence and support of Christ Himself and by what indwelling of the Holy Spirit was he strengthened for a victory so great as was involved in this glorying in the cross; but by what process was this change wrought in his own mind and affections; what were the steps by which he was led to glory in that which the whole world abhorred, and which he himself had once regarded with a like contempt and loathing? He

tells us himself in the next clause: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (or by which) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He was able to glory in the cross and to face all the terrors and all the attractions of the world because by Christ, or by the cross of Christ, *i.e.* by His crucifixion, that world was crucified to him and he to it. This was the method by which God moulded the elements of his nature to that new condition. This was what Christ had done for him by His cross.

Now consider for a moment these words. 1st. The world was crucified to him. The original brings out the connection in all its verbal force. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been hung upon the cross to me and I to the world." He could glory in the cross which was opposed to the world and the world to it for this reason, because the world was crucified to him. And now what does this mean? I ask you, What does crucifixion mean? It is no figure of speech. Beware of such an unworthy evasion. It is no more a figure here than in the former part of the sentence. The cross of Christ in which St. Paul gloried was a real event. The crucifixion of the world to St. Paul was real also. What does it

mean then? First, it means death, and nothing less than death. As regards St. Paul then the world was put to death. You see what a strong expression this is, but it is as literal as it is strong. For St. Paul the world as such had ceased to live; it was a dead world: and as death is the extinction of all active powers here, so too it had lost all power over him. As a world it could henceforth do him neither good nor evil. It could not any more affect him. It could neither tempt, nor terrify, nor solicit, nor attract, nor injure him. He was what so few ever are till they are on their deathbed, or even when they are on their deathbed—he was independent of the world; he was *free*. But crucifixion means more than death; it means dishonour. It means more still; it means whatever is included in the word infamy. And so was it viewed by the apostle. By the cross of Christ the world was transferred to a cross; not only dead, but dead as crucified. Whatever shame and vileness in the eyes of the world attended the death of the cross, all that shame and vileness now belonged in his eyes to the dead world. It lay in its disgrace as helpless as one dead; its powers crushed, its pleasures, honours, riches, praise, its blame, insult, wrong, persecution, whatever it could take or inflict indifferent to him, nay more, contemptible, for

it was crucified. In St. Paul's eyes the world was the malefactor, condemed and infamous. But you must remember that this view of the world as a system did not apply to the individual men and women who belonged to it. Far from it. On the contrary, the deeper and more intense his feelings of the evil and misery of the world itself, the greater was his tenderness and compassion for those entangled in its snares, and the more burning his desire to rescue them from it, for the service of his Lord.

And again, not only was the world thus crucified to St. Paul, but he also was crucified to the world. And this was strictly real also. He was dead to it, and by the same death. The same cross had wrought the double crucifixion. He had once been alive to the world ; no man perhaps could have been more so. With his great powers, mental and moral, his warm affections and points of contact with all human hearts, his universal sympathies, he was peculiarly fitted to shine in the world, and enjoy whatever it could give. But he was dead to it, as it was to him. All those appetites, passions, feelings, desires, interests, which earthly objects kindle in men's hearts were, as regarded the world's power over him, extinct. His heart had ceased to beat for it. The cross had taken a painful but sweet possession of his

heart; painful but sweeter than all pleasure. And the world also looked on him as one crucified to it; not belonging to it, dead, cast out, hated. As our Lord had forewarned His disciples: "Marvel not if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own." So wherever he went we find him suffering from the world, Jew and Gentile alike; men of Jerusalem and men of Athens, rejecting, scorning, beating, stoning, as something alien to their whole system and detestable, of which they would get rid in any way they could, so as to banish and expel it for ever. Why was this? Why was it that a man so good, so kind, so loving, so devoted to promoting the welfare of all his fellow-creatures was thus dealt with as an outcast and an enemy? Why? Because he was crucified to the world and the world to him. They had nothing in common. There was no ground for reconciliation between them. He was a follower of Christ. He belonged to the cross of Christ. He had taken it up and was carrying it. The world knew this well, and it dealt to him a measure of the outrages it had heaped upon the head of his divine Master.

And to this state St. Paul was brought by the cross of Christ itself. It was the instrument which worked this change in his character. The glory

of the cross extinguished, annihilated for him all the glory of the world, or rather transformed its glory into shame. The principle is a very obvious one: the greater glory absorbed the less, or rather, the true glory detected and consumed in its brightness the false. If you were to find yourself in some spacious, brilliantly illuminated apartment from which all daylight had been carefully excluded, you might be struck by the spectacle as splendid and imposing, but if in one moment every obstruction were removed, and the true light of the sun itself suddenly poured through the entire space, the artificial light would at once expire, and if you were to seek for it, you would discover only what was faded and mean. So it is with the glory of the cross and that of this present world. Daylight kills artificial light, and the glory of the cross kills the glory of the world.

And now, if you ask, What this glory is; what was it that St. Paul thus beheld? I answer generally,—It was that glory which has drawn all human souls to it for eighteen hundred years. The glory which has subdued, won, captivated all varieties of human nature, barbarous and civilised, intellectual and ignorant—all conditions, young and old, rich and poor, from the day it was first preached, and will continue to do so to the end of time. The glory which has dazzled,

entranced, melted, moulded the rude and defiled elements of our fallen nature, framing them into living saints and brightening them till they bear the unquestionable image of their Lord. The glory which all these, all the elect, have ever seen, shining through the world's night as a beacon, winning them on to follow it to their rest. The glory which all the redeemed, all the inhabitants of heaven, all the holy angels, all powers and dominions behold and adore, and which will be their adoration for ever. This was the glory which St. Paul saw. And if you go further, and say, Describe to us this glory; tell us what its nature is and in what it consists,—I say again, How can our weak and stammering tongues utter —our darkened minds behold—our maimed and mutilated powers apprehend and convey to others a conception of that transcendent glory which captivated the apostle? St. Paul saw more than Adam saw in Paradise—more than Moses saw on Sinai—more than Isaiah saw in the temple or Ezekiel at Chedar: no less than this,—a revelation of the glory of God. Just think of this. That sight which he beheld on the way to Damascus struck him blind, but it opened to him the unutterable splendours of an inward vision. He was hastening on his errand of persecution, doing the work of the world like many others, and per-

suading himself that it was the work of God. He looked upon the world as in the right, and upon our Lord as an impostor. Suddenly the light shone round about his path and the voice addressed him. What a revulsion! The Being whom he was at that moment persecuting in His Church; He who had suffered this miserable, shameful death; He had suffered for himself, for Paul the persecutor; He who had died thus was his Redeemer, his Saviour, his Lord, his God, his own, his all. What an eternity of wonder, of adoration, of heart-broken penitence, of love glowing, burning to sacrifice itself, was in that one moment's revelation of God to his soul! He who had suffered by the world, had suffered for the world, out of the mere bounty of all-pitying love.

This was the glory that St. Paul saw; no wonder it blinded him. He saw in the cross of Christ the most glorious of all objects to the creature that sees it—an object which we have no words to describe—the self-sacrificing love of God. He saw this, and having seen it, all creation was changed to him. Think of what a tremendous disclosure respecting the world must have burst upon the apostle's mind at the same instant. Think of how he must then and thenceforth have regarded the world which had been guilty of the crime of rejecting and crucifying its God and

loving Lord. St. Paul had been living in full friendship with the world up to that hour. We sometimes become intimate with people whom, though we do not value as possessing any high qualities, we yet like, and towards whom we entertain feelings of regard. We see their failings, but at the same time we believe them to be friendly and good-natured, ready to serve others if it does not cause them much trouble or sacrifice, and at any rate incapable of wilful wrong or unkindness. Now imagine such a person yourself, one of your own acquaintances, one of whom you had hitherto held this opinion, without anything occurring to lead you to doubt or change it. Suppose you were suddenly to discover that this same person with whom you were thus intimate and on kindly terms had been guilty of an act of wanton and barbarous cruelty upon one whom you also knew, and who was deserving of all kindness and honour. Suppose you not only knew the person who had received this treatment from your acquaintance, but that you loved him yourself; suppose you loved him for his goodness; that it was one whom you loved most on earth; the nearest to you of all—husband or wife, parent or child; suppose your acquaintance had inflicted upon this beloved object some horrid and cruel wrong. I will not pursue the thought, but imagine

to yourself all that you please of baseness and injury, the cross will help you to do so;—how would you feel from that time forward towards that pleasant, friendly, good-natured acquaintance? So then you may conceive some little of what St. Paul must have felt to the world when he discovered that this fair-spoken, smiling, friendly, bright world, with all its good-natured show, had rejected and crucified the best, the purest, the holiest, the greatest, the most bountiful, the most loving of all Beings, the Lord of Glory, its own Redeemer, God Incarnate. You can conceive how this glory of the Cross—and the greater and clearer the revelation of it, the more powerful would be the effect—how it would bring out the hideous evil and corruption of the world, and stamp it to his mind with indelible features of horror.

This is something of what the cross of Christ did for St. Paul; let me ask you now what has the cross done for you? You see what it ought to do and what it must do where it produces its effect. It changes a man's views of everything; of life because it will make him live for Christ, of death for it will bring him to Christ, of himself and of the world for it will crucify the world to him and him to the world. Has it done, or has it begun to do, anything of this for you? On

the cross you behold the manifestation, the expression of the love of your Lord to you—to you personally. It is your God, your Maker, that thus reveals Himself to you. It is in this guise He comes to seek His lost, to bring back His wandering sheep. God had tried many ways of winning man to Himself, and when all failed He sent His Son to give Himself for man that man might be won to give himself to God. This is all that God asks in return for the death of Christ—that as He gave Himself for you, you should give yourself. Is it not reasonable? Could He ask less? I advise you then this day in church, and when you go home, to fall upon your knees before God and make an unconditional surrender of yourself to Him. Realise to yourself those words of St. Paul: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again."

IX

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

I

"Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."—LUKE xv. 6.

THE parables in this chapter seem to have been elicited by the special circumstances of the crowd that surrounded our Lord when He spoke them. It consisted of two classes of persons, and to man's eyes nothing could be more marked and emphatic than the contrast between them. The Scribes and Pharisees, especially the latter, represented the religious world among the Jews. The Herodians were a political sect, the Sadducees were latitudinarians, but the Pharisees were orthodox in belief, strict in their outward practices, and everything, in short, that was respectable, according to the religious standard of the day. The publicans and sinners, on the other hand, represented the wicked world. The publicans were

odious by office, and corrupt in practice; the sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, were known to be what the name describes. The one class were the favourites of society; and if you could have asked any one then to point out to you a model Jew, there is no doubt that he would at once have fixed upon a Pharisee. The other class were outcasts, and their name a byword. And now look at these two classes as they are brought before us by St. Luke in the opening words of the present chapter. "Then drew near unto him"—*not* the Scribes and Pharisees, but—"all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." Nor is this all; the Scribes and Pharisees not only held back, but they murmured against Him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." These publicans and sinners, these outcasts of the world, are the people who are attracted towards Christ, while the Scribes and Pharisees, of whose religion men thought so much, not only stand aloof, but actually cavil at and condemn Him. And surely this is very perplexing at first sight, and that on a double ground. It is perplexing to find the great religious party of the day positively hostile to the teaching of Him who is the living truth; and again, it is still more perplexing to find that those whom even the world itself rejected should nevertheless be attracted to Him

who is not only truth, but spotless purity and holiness.

And yet, when we reflect on it, the difficulty is not so great as it at first appears. The Pharisees not only stood well in the opinion of the public, but they stood still better in their own. They were perfectly satisfied with themselves. They thought they were quite good enough, and needed no one to teach them or guide them to anything higher. There are many shades and degrees of Pharisaism, but the very essence of it consists in this same self-content; and wherever it exists it is a bar to all real approach to God and goodness. Perhaps it is the most hopeless state a man can be in. If you think that you are penitent enough, moral enough, religious enough, you will never seek Christ or listen to Him as long as you continue in that state of mind, because you do not and cannot feel any real need of Him. Nay, all Christ's teaching, all the precepts of the Gospel, as leading to what is higher than yourself, while you think that you are already high enough, must be absolutely offensive to you, and just as much so, though in a different way, as they were to the ancient Pharisee. And so these Pharisees both stood apart and murmured against our Saviour.

But how, then, was it that all the publicans

and sinners drew near to Him? This seems more difficult to explain. We can understand, indeed, how it was that they were not hostile to His teaching as opposed to self-reliance, because they had not any; but then one would suppose that the holiness of Christ's teaching and His person would repel them; that the worse they knew themselves to be, the more they would shrink away from One so infinitely removed from themselves in character and life, and whose words and works must condemn them. But the explanation is to be found in this, that where men are conscious of their sinfulness, as these people were, strange as it may seem, the more holy a man is the greater is his power of awakening their conscience and touching their souls. Real holiness gets at the sympathies of a sinner in a way in which no dry dogmatic teaching ever can. A saint's experience of the greatness of divine things, his humility, his considerateness, his charity, are felt in his presence, infuse themselves into his teaching, and bring him into a relation of sympathy with those he addresses that instinctively attracts them to him. It is not that he is more tolerant of sin in any of its forms than others are; on the contrary, those who are holy alone know anything of its evil; but because he does know in himself the evil of sin, he can get at the heart

and conscience of those who are under its power, while others only speak to their understanding. And hence our all-holy Saviour, by His very sanctity, irresistibly attracted those souls whom a consciousness of sin had prepared to listen to Him—"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him."

It was against this gracious dealing of our Lord that the Scribes and Pharisees murmured: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And in answer to their murmuring He spoke the three parables contained in this chapter, the first of which, the parable of the lost sheep, I propose to consider in this sermon.

The opening words of the parable give a direct answer to the Scribes and Pharisees. They murmured at His way of dealing with sinners, and He condescends to justify Himself by an appeal to their own practice. He was acting upon the very same principle on which they themselves would act, and which all must recognise to be natural and right. "What man of you"—which of yourselves—"having an hundred sheep, if he lose one, would not leave the ninety and nine, and go after the lost one till he find it?" Is not this what all of you would do? Would not that single lost sheep become for the time the engrossing object of the shepherd's in-

terest, so that he would actually leave the rest of the flock and go forth in order to seek it? This is our Lord's answer to those cavillers. But now observe the profound truth which, in order to be an answer, it must involve. For how does this care of the shepherd for the sheep apply to our Lord's treatment of sinners? What are the sheep to the shepherd? They belong to him; they are his flock, his own property. And what follows? If the shepherd cares for the sheep because they are his, then Christ also cares for sinners because they are His—they belong to Him. But to whom do men belong but to Him who made them? Christ then is their Maker; Christ is God. This answer, then, when we try to penetrate its meaning, contains an assertion, on our Lord's part, of the great truth of His essential Godhead. In no other way would it fully meet the complaint of the Pharisees. The shepherd cares for the sheep because they are his own; and men are Christ's flock, and He seeks them because they are His. And further than this, He intimates in the same passage that He is the God of Israel, He whom these very Jews themselves worshipped, by assuming that well-known title of Shepherd by which God had so frequently described Himself in the Old Testament.

In this parable, then, two subjects are set

before us: first, the state of man as a sinner represented by the lost sheep; and second, Christ as the Shepherd, not here in relation to all men, but especially in His dealing with the penitent, the sheep which the shepherd sought, found, and brought home on his own shoulders.

1. Let us take the first. We have here the state of a sinner by nature—the state of every man who is still in his sins and without repentance. Our Lord describes him as a sheep that is lost. Now we must understand that this description, as being His, coming from Him who knows us better than we can know ourselves, and knows all about us, our place in existence, our prospects, and the dangers we cannot know, is perfect for its purpose; that the lost sheep is a true figure, to the full extent to which it goes, of the sinner who has not repented,—of any of you, my brethren, who have not repented. And what a comparison is this! However weak, foolish, defenceless in itself this creature may be,—however imminent its dangers when lost,—such at the very least is the state of man as he is—of every sinner; he is all this, if he is not more. The sheep represents man on this side of his infirmity and blindness, and its being lost represents his dangers. But what a picture it is! There is no creature, I suppose, less able to take care of itself than the sheep. It

has neither the strength, the teeth or the fangs of the fiercer animals, and it is destitute of the intelligence or cunning which supply their place in others. It is a type, then, of the most utter helplessness, the most abject dependence. And thus it is that Christ represents the sinner. But now go on and think of such a creature as this being lost; think of a *lost* sheep; of what this must mean.

We may look at it in three ways: the sheep has lost the fold; it has lost the shepherd; it has lost itself. The sheep has lost the fold. Within the fold it had shelter, safety, care, companions; all its wants were provided for, and every danger averted by the watchful eye and the guardian hand of the shepherd; and it has lost all this, and wholly, and can never of itself recover them. Such is the state of the sinner. He has lost the true fold, the communion of saints, the blessed company of all faithful people, the guardianship of the holy angels who camp about them that fear the Lord. He has no part or share in those blessings that circulate as an atmosphere about the Church of Christ, and are the heritage of its living members. Outwardly he belongs to the body, and that only because the unfaithfulness of our day suspends its discipline; but inwardly he is an alien and a stranger, and his sin bars the entrance

against its grace and blessings. He is like what a leper would have been if he had been allowed to move among the congregation of Israel, instead of being excluded,—a living but hideous spectre among the living, utterly cut off and shunned.

Again, the sheep has lost the shepherd. It has lost its protector. It has strayed away from that one who fed, tended, watched over, sheltered it, and cannot find its own way back to him. And so the sinner has lost God. For to commit sin is to depart from God, and to live in sin is to live without Him. By loving obedience we keep near to God, and by disobedience we withdraw from Him; and he who withdraws from God loses Him by that act, for he cannot of himself return to God even if he would, and he loses the will to do it by leaving Him.

Finally, the sheep in losing safety, protection, and protector, has lost itself. It has strayed away, alone and helpless, to unknown danger and suffering, with nothing certain before it, unless rescued, but final destruction. Have you ever seen a poor animal worried, as it is called? It is a piteous sight. Yet this, at worst, is but an image. What must be the state of a soul worried by the devil? The Bible speaks of him in this way. He is that roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and when the

sinner forsakes God, he becomes an easy prey to him. Think, then, of the state of a soul that voluntarily exposes itself to the craft and malice of this dreadful being; think of this poor, blind, weak, foolish, sinful soul, of which the lost sheep is only a figure, throwing itself in the way of its great enemy, and refusing the help—for to sin is to do so—refusing the help of the only being who can protect it. Think of the misery of this soul—its misery even here, now, in the present life—harassed and tormented by its awful enemy, its blind, vain struggles with its own convictions, its struggles against temptations which it loathes while yielding to them, the remorse, the guilty fears, the dread of solitude, the dread of the thought of the gracious God Himself, the darkness within and without, a dark past, a dark present, a darker future; and all this now, on earth; and then go on further and see this soul, which has thus lost itself, launched into the next world,—think, I say, of this lost sheep cast adrift there; bring these two thoughts together if you can—loss and eternity; a history of ruin that will be going on for ever; a soul gone forth into that unknown, boundless wilderness alone, to exist without any hope or any end; read in this connection that most awful of all the chapters in the Old Testament, the twenty-eighth of Deuteronomy; the

threatenings of God against His own people if they were disobedient; and then you will have some conception of what Christ has made known to us of the true condition and prospects of a sinner, of every sinner who is still in his sins, under this image of the lost sheep.

2. And now let us turn to the other aspect of the parable, our Lord's dealings with the penitent, represented by the shepherd. The sinner is utterly and wholly lost, so far as regards the power of self-restoration or self-help. This is clearly marked. The sheep can lose, but it cannot find itself. But blessed be God there is One that can find it, and One that will. It is not the sheep that seeks the shepherd, but the shepherd that seeks for his sheep. Christ is this Shepherd. It is, as I said, a figure under which God delights to reveal Himself in the Old Testament—the Shepherd of Israel, leading His people like a flock—and of which figure our Lord is the Truth. He is the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Good Shepherd who, in the last manifestation of His love, laid down His life for the sheep. But the parable does not treat of that most endearing relation as it subsists between Him and those who are His own sheep emphatically, and have not wandered away from Him, and which is more fully brought out in pastoral

life in the East; where the shepherd knows his own sheep and they know him, where he calls them by name, and they know his voice and follow him, where he goes before them, leading, not driving, them; even risking his life for them, like David who slew the lion and the bear; of all, in a word, that is set out with such tenderness and beauty in the twenty-third Psalm, and in the tenth of St. John. The parable does not refer to this, but to our Lord as the Shepherd seeking the *lost* sheep,—bringing back the sinner to God. And now mark the steps in this divine work as he has traced them.

The shepherd leaves his secure flock, the ninety and nine, in the wilderness,—this does not mean, as with us, a wild barren tract, but rather one of those spots of rich and luxuriant vegetation which occur in the East, where they would feed safely and in a large pasture,—he leaves them and goes after the lost sheep till he finds it. The shepherd, you see, is ready to encounter toil and risk for the sake of the sheep; he does not shrink from the length and labour of the search, or the danger from wild beasts; he traverses wood and mountain, and perseveres till he has found the object of his search; and when he has found it, he forgets all his own weariness in the joy of its recovery, or rather, in his tender care he thinks

only of its weariness. He lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And what are we to understand by the shepherd leaving his flock to go in search of the lost sheep; what but the stupendous truth of the Incarnation? It was thus that the Good Shepherd sought us. He left the bosom of the eternal Father; He left the hosts of unfallen and adoring creatures; He came down from heaven to earth, down to the creatures whom He sought, down to the very nature of ours which He took upon Himself. He came into the wilderness of a rebellious and ruined world; He was made man; He sought for sinners by identifying Himself with them in His inconceivable condescension and infinite love. He pursued the sheep through all its wanderings and miserable estrangements, found it out, strove for it with that dreadful enemy into whose power it had fallen, and delivered it from the jaws of the lion. He sought us by all His sufferings for us endured throughout those thirty years of His sojourn among men, in which He bore all the contradiction of sinners against Himself, rewarding Him evil for good, and hatred for His goodwill. He sought us by His birth into this world, by His fasting, His temptation, His conflict with the powers of darkness, His agony, His betrayal, His death upon the cross; and He seeks His lost sheep still to this

hour, wherever they are. He is seeking them by His own voice in His Word, and by the voice of His messengers, and by the offer of His sacraments, spreading a table for them in the wilderness. He is calling to them night and day in the unwearied pertinacity of His mercy; they may hear that piercing voice, if they will only listen, at all times; He is calling to you now, if you are living without Him, if you are living in any unrepented sin, a wandering lost sheep,—He is calling you through the wilderness of life, following you when you fly from Him; He, the Good Shepherd, calls you at this moment by all His labours and sorrows for your sake, by the value of that soul which He valued at the price of His own precious blood, to hear Him and turn to Him. He is seeking you Himself; will you resist Him? will you still fly from Him?

And what is this that awaits the sheep when it is found? "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." Like that other saying of the prophet: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

O weary and heavy-laden soul; O sinner, burdened and bowed down with the weight of your sins, from which you can never deliver yourself; O wandering sheep, heartsore with the

troubles of life, and with nothing but the terrors of a dreadful and just judgment to look to hereafter; will you refuse to hear the voice of your Shepherd and your Saviour? Will you again to-day persist in turning away from Him? Come to Him who only waits to lift you up, to heal the wounds of your soul, and give you the life which sin has forfeited—who says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

X

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

II

"I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."—LUKE xv. 7.

THESE words, with which our Lord sums up and concludes the parable of the lost sheep, make known to us two great and consoling truths in connection with the restoration of the penitent sinner. One of these truths is, that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents; the other, that this joy over the penitent is even greater than that caused by those who do not need repentance—"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine just persons." The first of these truths,—and surely it is a great and wonderful one,—the joy over the penitent, is taught alike by all three of the parables in this chapter—the lost sheep, the lost money, and the prodigal son; the second,

which is greater still, is taught only in the first and last parable, where the complaint of the elder brother, when he hears of the rejoicing at home on the return of the prodigal, brings out and illustrates the statement of the text which closes the parable of the lost sheep—"There is joy over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine just persons;" for this is what the elder brother complains of,—the *greater* favour shown to the returning prodigal than was shown to himself.

The friends and neighbours of the shepherd and the woman called together to rejoice with them, and the fatted calf, the music and the dancing in the father's house, represent to us the joy in heaven,—the joy before the angels of God, on the return of the penitent sinner. But what a representation is it, what a house, what a home to have in prospect! Think of this, you in this congregation who have good ground to believe that you have in truth and sincerity turned to God, that you have renounced and forsaken all sin; you whose hearts' desire it is to be delivered from it; you who would not wilfully and deliberately give way in thought, word, or deed to anything which you knew to be displeasing to Him,—think of it; think of what a home you have to look forward to. Heaven is your Father's house; heaven is then your home! What an encourag-

ing, what an ennobling prospect! And you who know but too well at this hour that you have not repented, and who perhaps have no real comfort even in your earthly home, think of the home that God here sets before you to draw you to Himself. Would you not wish to have God for your reconciled Father, heaven for your home, the angels to rejoice over you? The one condition is your repentance. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

But who are the just persons spoken of in the text which need no repentance? This does not at once appear, and the words have been variously understood. It has been supposed that, as the Scribes and Pharisees gave occasion for the parable by murmuring against our Lord for His gracious conduct towards sinners, it was to them He referred; that He meant by just persons, not those who were really just, but those who thought themselves so—self-satisfied, like the Pharisees; and that, in the same sense, they needed no repentance—that is, they did not think they needed any, or had anything to repent of. But it is taking an unwarrantable and dangerous liberty with our Lord's words to attempt to explain them in this way. He does not *say* that He is speak-

ing of those who think themselves just, but of those who *are* just; nor of their *thinking* that they need no repentance, but of their *not* needing it. By these words He describes a particular class of people, and we have no right to suppose that they mean or are intended to apply to any other. Besides, the drift of the entire passage excludes such an application. Our Lord compares together two classes—the penitent sinner and the just who needs no repentance; and what He says is, that there is greater joy over the sinner, when he repents, than over the just, who does not need repentance. There is joy then over *both*—over the just and over the penitent; but if by the just were meant those who are just only in their own opinion, but not just in fact,—like the self-satisfied Pharisee,—then the statement would amount to this, that there is joy over the penitent and joy over the Pharisee, only a greater joy over the former than over the latter—a consequence so opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture that I need do no more than merely mention it.

The just then here spoken of are not the Pharisees—they are the really just; but who are these? Are we to understand by the term the faithful servants of God, whether under the Old Testament or under the New? Now it is true

that the term is commonly so applied in Scripture, as in the case of Lot, of Joseph, of Cornelius the centurion, and others, that while it is said of man in his natural state, "there is none righteous, no, not one," it is said of those in a state of grace that "the just shall live by faith." But though this is true, and the term is therefore applicable to God's servants in such a sense, yet to understand it so here would scarcely suit the tenor of the passage. The comparison is between the penitent and the just absolutely, and not in the limited sense in which the term can be applied to men. The force of the comparison would be lost if the just were to mean anything less than the just in the full sense of the word. But more than this: you must remember that all God's servants upon earth *are* penitent sinners. All were born in sin; all have actually sinned, though not all in the same way or to the same degree; all have needed or do need repentance; and the difference between the penitent referred to in the parable and the maturest saint, is not a difference of nature, as it would be if the one were a penitent and the other absolutely just, but a difference of progress; repentance being the entrance to a new life which the penitent has just passed, while the saint, in proportion to his maturity, has advanced far upon the way. We must bear in mind, in fact, that

repentance is of two kinds: a first or general repentance, and an habitual repentance. The first repentance is that by which the sinner first forsakes his sins and turns to God. Such was the repentance of Zacchæus, and of that model of penitents, the woman in the seventh of St. Luke, who loved much; and this is the repentance signified by the recovery of the lost sheep in the parable. This general repentance is a complete change of heart, and a change of life; all sin is forsaken once for all, and new feelings about God and about sin against Him, pain, sorrow, compunction, self-condemnation, fear and love, take possession of the mind. This general repentance, involving as it does a revolution in the character and life, takes place but once, and it is necessary for all who have voluntarily departed from God, and, in the case of Christians, for all who have fallen from the grace of baptism. The other kind of repentance may be called habitual. Repentance is the forsaking of sin; and as a Christian is required to forsake sin daily and habitually throughout his entire life, in this view of it the entire life of a Christian is a life of repentance, and he must therefore be a penitent as long as he lives, nor can any progress he may make exempt him from being one. Hence, though the term just might, in the sense to which

I have referred, be applied to God's faithful servants, they could not be described as the just who need no repentance; because, though they do not need the first or general repentance, they do, and always must, need the second. However far advanced in the Christian life, in one aspect of their character, they are and will be to the last nothing more than penitent sinners.

The just then who need no repentance cannot, as we have seen, be the Pharisees, and they cannot be merely good men. The former are not just at all, and the latter are *not* just in the strict sense of the word, and they *are* penitents. Another view is that by the just are meant the angels; and it is true that the description would apply to them both as being just, and as not needing repentance, having never sinned. But on the other hand, as our Lord says here that there shall be joy in heaven over the penitent, and heaven is the abode of the angels; and as He says expressly in the next parable, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," thus identifying the two cases, they can scarcely be the just to whom the passage directly refers, since, if they were, it would represent them as rejoicing over themselves, and as rejoicing less over themselves than over the penitent. This view, however, seems to point to

the true meaning of the words, which may properly be understood of any holy beings to whatever rank or order they belong. They speak of the just in the abstract—of all who are really just, who have never sinned, and who therefore do not need repentance; and of all such our Lord says that there is joy in heaven over the penitent more than over them—more than over those who have not fallen, and need no repentance.

But what does this mean, or how is it to be accounted for? We can understand and can derive comfort and thankfulness from being told that the angels rejoice at all at the penitent's return; it makes known to us their great love and sympathy for us; but our Lord's words go beyond even this, wonderful as it is. Not only is there joy over the penitent, but there is *greater* joy than over the unfallen; and not only is this so, but the joy over *one* penitent is greater than the joy over *many* unfallen,—as the contrast is between one sinner that repents and ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. How is this? The angels are holy beings, and must from their nature shrink from even a single act of sin—that is, of disobedience to God; and how much more a sinner, with an astonishment and a horror which we cannot conceive. How then is it possible for such as they are to regard the penitent—one who

has once sinned—with greater complacency than they do those who have never offended? Besides, does there not even seem to be something partial and unfair—the same thing is expressed in the complaint of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal—in this preference of one who has sinned and repented before those who have always been obedient?

Now, in the first place, I may observe that the parable itself accounts for this greater joy of the angels by referring it to a common principle of our nature with which experience has made us all familiar. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine that were safe to go after the one which was lost; and when he returns he calls his friends together to rejoice with him, not over all the flock, but over the one which was found. Are we to conclude that because the shepherd left his flock to go in search of his lost sheep, he really cared more for that one than for all the rest; or when he called his friends together to rejoice with him on recovering it, he would not have rejoiced as much in the recovery of any other of the flock if it had been lost and found instead? His greater joy was due, not to the value in which he held the one sheep as compared with the ninety and nine, but to their different circumstances. The loss of the sheep drew all his affection towards it

for the time, and its recovery absorbed all his joy. This is only our nature. The loss or danger of any single object we value makes us for the moment forget all similar objects which are not in danger; and so with the joy of recovery. Any sudden pain or pleasure makes us for the moment forget other pains or pleasures. When one we love leaves us, we think of that one only; not that we love others less, but they are not leaving us. When such a one returns, all our joy is with that one for the time, and for the same reason. Our human affections do not possess that sustained diffusiveness which would embrace all their objects in all their circumstances at the same time; and are drawn out on each occasion in that direction in which the strongest claim is made upon them. And such, as it would appear from our Lord's words, is the nature of angels too. The penitent was lost and is found; and so they rejoice over him more than over those who never were lost, and therefore have never awakened in them the same feeling.

But there may be a still deeper reason for this joy. The truth is, there is a great and essential difference between these two characters — the character of a penitent sinner, and the character of an unfallen creature, which, however they may approximate, can never wholly disappear; and

this difference lies in the elements out of which each is formed. They both serve God now; but one has served Him always and is ignorant of what disobedience is; the other has sinned, has a practical experience of it, and the knowledge, while it may be an additional safeguard, cannot be lost. We may even conceive the penitent to be raised to a greater height of holiness than the unfallen; and yet still his nature would be the same—a restored nature, not one that had never known taint or stain. Now it is in this difference between the two *kinds* of character—that of the penitent and of those who do not need repentance, because they have never sinned—that we find another reason for the greater joy over the former. The penitent is a new creation; he belongs to a new order of being; God's attributes, His goodness, His wisdom, and His power are displayed more signally in him than in any other creature. And therefore we should say that the angels must look upon a penitent, upon one who has been lost and is restored, who has been twice created—not only created good in the first instance, but *re*created after having fallen; but who differs from the unfallen in this, that the whole process of this second creation has been wrought out in his own consciousness, and with the consent and co-operation of his own will,—that they

must, I say, regard such a being with a peculiar tenderness of interest, that they must rejoice over him with an intense and wondering joy, not only from the fact of his restoration, but from the very character which that restoration has formed, which they cannot feel towards any other creature; and this is illustrated by that saying of St. Bernard's, that the tears of the penitent are the wine of angels. And now let me, before concluding, point out some of those elements in the character of a penitent that are calculated to evoke this special interest and affection.

Some traits of character belong to the penitent that do not belong to the unfallen at all; and some that are common to both belong to the penitent in a greater degree.

And first, and at the foundation of all, is the abiding, indestructible sense of *de*merit. The penitent from the outset, and through all the stages and ascents of his future being, to whatever heights of sanctity and blessedness God may hereafter raise him, can never once forget the rock from which he was hewn, and the hole of the pit from which he was digged. He can never forget it as his origin, his nature—even if grateful love could allow him to forget it. This sense of demerit then is and must be peculiar to the nature of one who has sinned; a sinless creature

can have no acquaintance with it. The highest angel may feel that he is wholly devoid of merit before God. Having done all from the moment of his creation, he may say, and say it with the most perfect truth, that he is but an unprofitable servant, and in his greatest deeds of most perfect service he has only done what it was his duty to do; he can go this far, but no further. There is no defect in his service, no failure, much less has there ever been an approach to transgression. And therefore, though he may truly and wholly disclaim all merit, he can never take to himself any blame. He could not conceive himself as blameable. But the penitent feels, and must always feel, that he is not only *un*deserving before God, but *ill*-deserving; not merely that merit is an impossibility, but that there is in him an absolute unworthiness which must for ever make him feel as a simple dependant upon grace for everything; and seek the lowest place always, and with a childlike readiness, as the only place that can be his—if indeed there can be any place for such as he.

And with this sense of unworthiness from sin, however long past, comes another feeling also peculiar to the penitent, that of compunction—what was once a piercing sorrow for sin, the sweetness and fruit of which will remain long

after the actual wounds caused in the soul by sin have been healed. Compunction penetrates the whole nature, and deepens all the elements and attributes of the Christian character. It brings the penitent face to face with himself, making him his own judge, not only humble, but displeased with himself, distrustful and afraid of himself, chastened and subdued in heart, and thence more sympathising, compassionate, and forbearing towards others. The Scripture says "a broken and contrite heart," that is, bruised and crushed together; so there are flowers that yield sweetest perfume only when crushed. Compunction brings the penitent to a more utter and simple and exclusive hanging upon God in all things. Sorrow seems to be the only remedy for the otherwise incurable levity of the human heart. I do not mean only outward troubles or afflictions, but any real grief. Compunction is such sorrow, and he who obtains it has learned the lesson of the seriousness of life in a way that sorrow only can teach it.

Another feeling which is his, but in a peculiar sense, is gratitude. Unfallen creatures may indeed be grateful to God; the life of an angel may be one ceaseless song of praise for blessings as ceaseless. Yet this does not reach the case of the penitent. His exclamation as he contem-

plates God's mercies is not only, "What is *this* that God does?" but "What is this, to *me?*" For his gratitude is not merely for blessings however intrinsically vast, but for blessings that were forfeited; a sense of inexhaustible obligation for blessings whose value has been incomparably enhanced by their forfeiture and restoration. It is the gratitude of one who, having done all that he was commanded, would not only say that he was an unprofitable servant, but would feel that he had done nothing; nay, would delight even in the thought of his own helplessness, emptiness, and inanition, in presence of the infinite bounty of his benefactor. As we have it in St. Paul, who says: "I *take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." It is the feeling not only of gratitude, but of gratitude that can never make amends, not in the way of payment, but from the sense of wrong done and the greatness of the debt, and yet actually rejoicing in its own poverty as more magnifying the gift and the Giver.

And lastly, and above all, there is the new feeling of grateful love for the mode of the penitent's restoration—for all that is included in man's redemption. The love of the penitent is not merely love for blessings restored after having been forfeited, not love for pardon alone, or for

recovery, or for grace given, but love growing from faith in Christ, love in return for redeeming love; grateful love to the true Shepherd in this parable, who Himself sought His lost sheep, found it, rescued it, redeemed it, and that by His own sufferings and in His own person, and brought it back again, bearing it Himself to safety. And this love is so great as to be a new feeling in our nature—perhaps in creation. The love of a creature, not to its Maker alone, on whom it hangs for everything, but to its Redeemer; to its God, who first made and then saved, and saved by coming Himself down to the level, uniting Himself to the nature, dying to restore that creature which had forsaken Him and lost itself.

These are some of the new affections that mark off and separate the character of the penitent from the entire unfallen creation—self-abasement, sorrow, and self-forgetting love. We have an instance of them all in her whom St. Luke describes as she appeared at the feast in Simon's house. She stood at our Lord's feet behind Him. She wept. She washed His feet with her tears, wiped them with the hairs of her head, kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. And *He* said of her that she loved much. This was what she became from what she had been. This was the pattern of penitents. Can we wonder that

when the angels see a human soul thus changed —when they see this new nature emerging in its beauty born of tears out of the chaos and darkness of the fall, they should indeed rejoice with the thrill of a new and unknown delight over this wonderful work of God, and join with an intenser fervour in the heavenly song, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints"?

XI

THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER

I

"Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."—LUKE xv. 8.

ON first reading this parable, the instruction to be derived from it would seem to be identical with that of the preceding parable of the lost sheep. The sheep and the piece of money are both lost; in each case the owners, the shepherd and the woman, seek for and recover what was lost; and in each we have the key to the parable as representing the restoration of the sinner, in the joy in heaven and before the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. So far, apparently, the two parables are alike. But when we compare them more closely we cannot fail to be struck with the difference between them,—a differ-

ence so marked as to imply some corresponding difference in their teaching. Thus, for instance, in the first of these parables, that which is lost is a living creature, though an irrational one—a sheep. In the other it is an inanimate object—a coin. Then, the sheep has wandered into a wilderness; while the money, on the contrary, is lost in a house. Again, the value of the coin is not intrinsic, but derived, namely, from the stamp and impress which it bears. And further, in the first parable the owner is a shepherd; in the other, a woman. Moreover, the shepherd goes after the sheep into the wilderness, and carries it home on his shoulders when he finds it,—a vivid image of the Incarnation, and of the love of Christ for His sheep; while in the second parable, the woman does not leave the house, but carries on her search within; and the other details belonging to it—lighting the candle or lamp, sweeping the house, seeking diligently—have nothing to correspond with them in the former one.

Finally, in the parable of the lost sheep, the joy is *in heaven* over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance, and it is also a future joy—*there shall be joy;* while in that of the piece of money the joy is *before the angels of God*, and it is present—*there is joy*—and there is no mention

here of the just who need no repentance. These particulars then would lead us to look for some special teaching in the parable of the money differing from what is given in the parable of the sheep. Let us proceed to consider what it is.

And first,—taking together the three parables in this chapter, which were all spoken on the same occasion, and are closely connected,—we have the sinner represented in them under three different aspects, answering to three distinct stages in sin. The foolishness of sin is shown in the wandering sheep; the hardness and insensibility of sin, in the lost coin; its wilfulness and rebellion, in the prodigal son. Here are three separate stages, one worse than the other, beginning in folly and ending in open rebellion. On the other hand, we have the shepherd whose human voice the sheep knows, the woman who searches diligently for her lost money, and the father who waits for his repentant son, shadowing forth the agency of the three Persons of the blessed Trinity in the work of man's restoration. God the Father is revealed to us in the parable of the prodigal, in which the story, and the interpretation of it, are so closely interwoven that the parable may be said to carry with it its own explanation; God the Son is represented by the shepherd; and who is meant by the woman in this parable of the coin? The

question seems to me to admit but of one answer —It is God the Holy Ghost. We may infer this, first, from the fact that the other two parables relate respectively to the first and second Persons of the Trinity, and if this parable does not relate to the third Person, we have no other suitable subject to refer it to. The same argument which is employed in explaining the form of words in baptism, and in the apostolic benediction, applies here. It would be impossible to suppose that any mere creature would be associated with two Persons of the Godhead in the work of man's restoration ; and yet the woman represents a person, and that person must be either the Holy Spirit or a creature. And secondly, the work of the woman is distinctly characteristic of the work of the Holy Ghost. It is altogether an inward work, carried on in the soul itself, as we shall see directly when I come to explain the parable, just as the work of redemption in the person of the Shepherd was an outward one carried on in the world. Nor is there any lack of precedent for the application of a feminine type to a divine person. We have a similar instance in the parable of the leaven in Matthew xiii., where the woman who hides the leaven in five measures of meal also represents the Holy Spirit ; and again, wisdom is feminine, and it is one of our Lord's titles in the Book of Proverbs,

and He adopts the name, Luke vii. 35, "Wisdom is justified of her children."

One more lesson which we may derive from the connection between these three parables relates to the absolute sovereignty of God and the free will and agency of man. Both are taught, and the teaching practically harmonised in the combined teaching of these parables. When we read the parables of the sheep and the lost coin, and find that the entire work of their recovery is due to the shepherd in the one case, and the woman in the other—that the sinner is represented under figures from which he appears not only helpless but even unconscious, we might conclude that man is nothing more than a mere machine in the hands of God, incapable of helping himself in any degree, or of doing anything in regard to his own salvation, but must lie absolutely passive till God seeks, finds, and restores him. This is one side of the parables. Salvation is God's exclusive work. Now look at the other side in the parable of the prodigal son. Repentance is altogether the prodigal's own doing. He comes to himself. He sets before him his past sins in all their enormity. He makes no attempt to extenuate them. He goes through the pain and bitterness of total self-condemnation. He longs to throw himself wholly upon his father's mercy, and abase

himself to the level of a slave. He resolves to do it. He encounters the privations and dangers of the journey, the shame and humiliation of returning home a beggar. He goes through all, and makes his confession, not knowing how he will be received. Here the entire work of repentance appears as man's work, nor is there any intimation, from the beginning to the end of the parable, of divine interference or help. If you were only to read the first two parables, you would say at once that everything in regard to the salvation of the sinner is done by God—that man has nothing to do. If you were to read the last parable only, you would conclude that nothing is done by God, but that man himself does everything. When you read the three together, you learn that God is supreme, and that man is free; that God saves us, and yet in every step we may either reject or accept salvation; that God seeks, finds, restores, and yet that we must ourselves consciously and actively return to Him, or we never shall be restored at all.

I come now to the immediate subject of the parable. It divides itself into two parts. First, the loss of the coin. Second, the search for it, and its recovery. To the former of these I shall confine myself in this sermon—the lost coin.

"What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one of them"—

The woman here represents, as we have seen, the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity. And as we proceed we shall find the view fully confirmed by the details of the parable. The pieces of silver may stand for the whole intelligent creation, or the entire number of the elect, ten being a perfect number, or they may represent the orders of the angelic hierarchy. With regard to the piece that is lost, all expositors agree in finding in this a representation of the soul of man. When the Jews tempted our Lord with the question of paying tribute to Cæsar, He called for the tribute money and asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" And they answered, "Cæsar's." It bore the image of a king; this was its value. And as bearing his image, it was his; for, our Lord adds, "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;" and the application was unanswerable. They could not refuse to render to him what they were forced to admit was his own, and they were struck dumb between their unwillingness to acknowledge and their inability to deny the truth. And so too man was made in the image of God, and by the law of his creation was bound to render to God what was so intimately and indefeasibly His. He

bears that image still; it may be defiled and distorted, wasted and worn away by sin, but there it is stamped upon his soul, the image of God, the title and proof of his parentage, reminding him of what he was once, remonstrating with him against his evil ways, and retaining in itself still all the possibilities of restoration. Yes, my brethren, it is there: you and I bear this image, and whenever we sin wilfully, dreadful to say, we are doing our best to deface and blot out that image in our souls, although in this life it is not wholly obliterated. Nay, we cannot tell but that even for those who are finally lost, some lingering shadows of this great image may still remain, like the worn records of a tombstone, or the shattered splendours of a ruin, indicating man's original glory; while the very devils may shudder as they recognise in a human soul the tokens of a more utter and incredible apostasy than their own. They may point to such a soul in blended astonishment and horror, and say, "Look, there is a being worse than we are ourselves. We indeed are rebels against our Creator: there is one who was made in the image of God, and the work of his life has been to dishonour, trample, and destroy it."

Such is the coin with its image and superscription. But this coin, thus stamped and sent forth as the current token of God in creation, is

lost. That is, first, man is fallen from God. He has sinned, and forfeited his first place among God's creatures, and he can never of himself regain that place. Let us understand this thoroughly, my brethren, for it is all-important. A sinner is one who has fallen away from God, and this fall, so far as any powers or resources of his own are concerned, is final. He neither can make any amends to God for the awful outrage against the divine majesty involved in the bare act of sin, nor can he recover himself after his fall, or repair the injury he has inflicted upon his immortal nature, by any skill or strength of his own. Sin, all sin, is in and by itself irreparable, and the being who has once sinned, as regards self-help or the help of any other creature, is beyond it: the coin is lost.

Obvious as all this is or ought to be, I believe there is no harder lesson to learn than that of our own absolute helplessness in and of ourselves, and none surely more necessary. I do not mean as a speculative opinion, for in this way perhaps few would question it, but as an awful fact of our nature, and one which *must* be brought home to us practically. We must learn our own weakness; God must show it to us, or we will never seek the remedy for it, which is to be found only in Him. Every beginner in religion is sanguine and self-

confident. He thinks that all he has to do is to make good resolutions, and believing that he is sincere, and relying upon himself, he is sure of keeping them. Then comes temptation, and he fails. At first when this happens he is surprised, disappointed, and distressed at being so easily overcome; and again he resolves, and is again tempted, and falls. And then when this occurs repeatedly—and does it not?—one or other of two things commonly follows: either he begins to think that it is quite useless for him to make any more resolutions, seeing that he only breaks them, and so he gives up the attempt altogether, and follows his own way without check or struggle; or he is bitter and indignant with himself when he sins, and though he does not wholly abandon the struggle, he continues it without energy or hope, instead of trying in earnest to find out what is at the root of these incessant failures, and what is the remedy. For consider this: When any of us fall into any sin or fault — I am supposing of course that it is not done wilfully, and that we *wish* to avoid it—*why* does he fall? Supposing, I say, we are sincere, is it not from want of strength to stand firm? Surely it is. And why do we want strength? It must be either because we think we have it already, and do not need to seek it; or because we think that God would not

give it to us if we asked Him. But the latter cannot be the reason. No one here would dare to say that he does not believe God would help him if he really and earnestly sought His help. If then we fail from *want* of strength, it must be from the other reason, because we *think* we have it—because we think we have strength enough already, and therefore we do *not* really seek it from God. We think we are able to overcome, we think we can *save ourselves* in this particular instance, and therefore we do not look to God to save us. If we only knew how weak we are, we should never be surprised at our fall when left to ourselves. All the bitterness and indignation that men feel against themselves at their repeated and shameful failures in spite of their good resolutions —if it does not come from true repentance—comes from mortified pride at every fresh proof they meet of their own weakness and wretchedness. If we are really in earnest, we should not be too angry with ourselves, but rather meekly accept from God another proof and a deeper insight into our own misery. Anger is violent and agitating. What we want is a calm, profound, penetrating consciousness that we cannot help ourselves AT ALL; to humble ourselves in the dust before God, and acknowledging what we are, and throwing ourselves wholly on His help, to say—"*De profundis*

clamavi—out of the deep have I cried unto Thee, O Lord—the deep of my own utter emptiness and misery, where I find nothing to rest on or trust to, but sink more and more, the more I lean on myself. Lord, hear my voice."

This is the lesson of the coin—man's inherent helplessness. We come now to the place where this coin is lost. It is not lost in a wilderness like the sheep, but in a house. Observe the difference, and what it means. A wilderness, far from human dwellings, is a common figure of the present world where man wanders without God; a house is a human habitation, the abode of a family, and represents the Church of Christ. This house is the abode of the woman, and belongs to her—a further proof of the application of the symbol to the third Person of the Trinity, for the Holy Ghost abides in the Church, which is His. This reference to the Church as a house is frequent in Scripture. Thus St. Paul (1 Tim. iii. 15) says that the *house* of God is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth; and (Heb. iii. 6) that we Christians are Christ's *house*. Again, St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 5) says, that as lively stones, we are built up a spiritual *house;* and (iv. 17) that judgment must begin at the *house* of God. And again, representing it as the abode of a family,

St. Paul says (Eph. ii. 19) that the Church is the *household* of God, and (22) that it is the *habitation* of God through the Spirit.

The house then is the Church, and the Holy Ghost dwells in it. And this leads us further into the full meaning of the coin. The sheep in the wilderness typifies a sinner as God's *creature* before he has been brought to Him, like the publicans and sinners in this chapter, for instance, or like the heathen nations of the world. The coin in the house shows him in a different aspect, after he has been brought into the Church by baptism, and with the stamp of God renewed upon him. Now in one way the coin would seem to present man under a higher aspect than the sheep, because of the image which it bears, but in another, it exhibits his condition as being worse; for while the sheep is a living creature and can know the shepherd, the coin is a piece of senseless matter, and unless found, must lie where it falls, as long as the house, or as long as the world stands. Now this teaches us all a very awful and important truth, and one which we should earnestly apply to ourselves. It teaches us that those who sin within the Church are in a worse state than those who sin in heathenism, and it shows us, from the very nature of the coin, in what the special malignity of the sins of Christians consists;

it consists in insensibility—hardness of heart. The coin *in the house* represents this. The wilful sins of Christians are not sins only—they are, more or less, hardened sins. It is not merely that they are worse in themselves than the same sins committed by the heathen—as having the aggravations of light, knowledge, and grace, which all may be said to have in some degree at least—but that they are specially characterised by this paralysis of the affections. For surely nothing tends more to harden the heart and debase the moral nature than to know or hear what God has done for us, and what He claims of us, and to live as if He had done nothing. Every day we live on in such a state we are rendering ourselves more and more incapable of being ever brought under those influences which alone can save us. Every day we live on in the knowledge of the tremendous fact that Christ—God died for us, that Christ now intercedes for us, that Christ will yet judge us, without doing any single thing to correspond with this knowledge, we are becoming as wholly dead to it as if we never knew it—as dead as the lost coin that lay in the house. I am speaking from my own sad experience, and what must be the experience of every clergyman. I have known those who were living a careless and sinful life, neglecting the commonest duties of religion, not

even attending church on Sundays, or coming only when it suited their own convenience, living without God, and, if the Scriptures are true, on the very brink of perdition; I have spoken to them, and remonstrated with them over and over again, and they have shown no more impression than this does when I strike it. They had given themselves the habit of hearing without attending to what they hear, of knowing and not doing, and truths that once might have touched their hearts and aroused their hopes and fears, seemed to have lost their power and had ceased to affect them.

I have now gone through that part of the parable which I proposed to consider in this sermon, and must defer to another occasion the consideration of the latter part which relates to the recovery of the lost coin. There is one point common to the three parables, so significant in its bearing on what I have just said that I cannot help drawing your attention to it before I conclude. It is the way in which this awful word *lost* is reiterated in each of the parables. The shepherd says, "I have found my sheep that was *lost;*" the woman, "I have found the piece that I had *lost;*" the father of the prodigal, "This my son was *lost.*" What does this emphatic repetition teach? The words are plain. The sinner, as

long as he continues impenitent, according to these words of Christ Himself, is *lost*. It is not that he is in danger of being lost, but that now, in his present state, and as long as he continues in that state, he *is* lost. He needs no more, no further aggravation, no additional act of sin to bring this about. It is his actual condition at this moment, pronounced to be such by the very lips of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Think of this, any of you in this church who know that you are impenitent,—it is easy to know, for not to be penitent is to be impenitent,—think of it, I beseech you, as well as you can ; it is the way in which your Saviour describes your state ; lay it to heart now while you hear it, and God gives you time. I leave the word with you ; to dwell upon it would be to weaken it. I will only add from the parable this, —so full of encouragement and hope for us all,— that though the coin was lost to all appearance irrecoverably, the woman who owned it, and who represents God the Holy Ghost, lit her lamp, swept the house, and sought diligently for it till she *found it*. May we all be so found by the same blessed Spirit!

XII

THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER

II

"Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."—LUKE xv. 8.

THE three great parables in this chapter represent, under their respective symbols, the work of the three Divine Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity in the salvation of men, together with the different conditions of those with whom they deal. In the parable of the prodigal we are shown the work of God the Father in *Providence*, chastising the sinner for his sins, till He mercifully leads him, by the path of humiliation and suffering, to deep and entire repentance. In the shepherd we see the work of God the Son in *Redemption*, seeking the sheep by His Incarnation, and leading it back by the triumph of His cross. And in the

woman who recovers her lost coin we learn the work of God the Holy Ghost in *the dispensation of grace*, and the means which He employs in seeking, finding, and restoring the human soul.

The two parables then of the prodigal and the shepherd relate to God's *outward* work both in Providence and in Redemption: in the former, all those circumstances and events in which He disposes the course of nature and the agency of man for the accomplishment of His own gracious purposes; and in the other, all the stupendous events attendant upon the coming of the Son of God to save man. All these are outward. In the parable of the coin, on the other hand, the subject is God's *inward* work—His secret and immediate dealings with the soul itself, till its restoration is finally effected.

I now come to the consideration of the latter part of this parable, the search for and the finding of the lost piece of money.

I left off where the coin is lost. And now a new power appears in the parable: the woman begins her search for the lost coin. And this is no less than the Holy Ghost seeking after the human soul. As in the former parable the shepherd seeks the sheep—that is, Christ comes upon earth to seek man, so here the Holy Ghost also comes to seek the soul. But, as I said, with this

difference, that while Christ came in the first instance outwardly, by His Incarnation, the Holy Ghost comes inwardly, by His operation and indwelling. This then is what is set before us here, and what concerns us all,—the Almighty Spirit coming among us to seek His own creature; a spectacle for men and angels.

And first, the Holy Ghost is here represented as seeking the sinner within the Church itself, for it is to such, as we have already seen, that the parable directly refers—not to the world at large, but to Christians who have fallen from God, or who are still far from Him. What are the means He uses, *how* He seeks, we shall see directly, but I want you first to try and realise to yourself this stupendous fact, so full of awe assuredly, but also full of consolation and support for those who will receive it, that throughout the whole Church, everywhere, in every land, in every parish, in every congregation, despite of outward divisions and internal errors, the Holy Ghost is truly in the Church, and that He is seeking for those who without Him are lost. For remember, it is He who always first seeks us, never we that first seek Him. There is not a good thought or suggestion that enters the mind, not a single real yearning after a better life, not a right resolution that you ever form, not a fervent prayer or a struggle against temptation,

but is prompted by this blessed Spirit, and a token that He is dealing with us. This is what is for ever going on—this silent, mysterious operation. Here and there, now in one place, now in another, as He wills,—and His will is wisdom and love,—He is touching the inmost springs of men's hearts ; He is calling them from within,—as our Lord called His apostles, one from the receipt of custom, others from their fishers' nets,—and as He does so, a change passes upon them, sometimes slight at first, the giving up of some bad habit, attention to some hitherto neglected duty, more seriousness of mind,—sometimes deeper and more pervading,—but still, when it does come, the beginning of a new and altered life, which, if they will, grows from it as the fruit from the seed.

And hence this seeking of the Holy Ghost is carried on, not only within the Church, but within the individual man. For as the Christian, however fallen, is to be sought in the Church, so the soul is to be sought in the inner man. Nor is there anything arbitrary in this secondary application of the symbol of the house. The aspects of Scripture are manifold, and the same type may stand for different objects, as the same ray of light yields various colours. Taking it in this sense then,—the house being the individual man, the coin with its impress, the image of God in the soul,—we

have here a description of the actual work of the Holy Ghost in recovering and restoring it, and now observe the order of this great and divine work.

"What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?"

Here are four distinct things done, each of them denoting a separate work of the Holy Ghost. 1. Kindling the light; 2. Sweeping the house; 3. Seeking diligently for the coin; and 4. The finding it. Let us consider them.

1. *Kindling the light:* the woman lights a candle or lamp. Under this homely image we are shown what God does first in the conversion of a soul to Himself. He gives it light. All things must begin with light. So it was with the material creation which St. Paul parallels with this: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." God Himself is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world; the Holy Ghost is the enlightener of men. And so His first act when He visits the soul is to give it light. But what are we to understand by this light which the Holy

Ghost kindles? It may be the word of God, which is so often spoken of in Scripture as light. Thus in the Psalms: "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths;" and Psalms: "The entrance of thy word giveth light." It may be conscience which is called in Proverbs the candle of the Lord; and our Lord, referring to it in St. Luke, says, "Take heed that the light that is in you be not darkness," or it may be both Scripture and conscience. But in any case we must observe that they are not the source, but the organ or instrument of the light. It is the woman in the parable that lights the candle, which yields no light till she kindles it; and this teaches us that the enlightening power must come in the first instance from the Holy Ghost. Conscience is dark, the mind is dark, the divine word itself will not shed its light within the soul till it is thus illuminated by the Holy Spirit. We have an instance of this in St. Augustine's conversion, of which he has himself left the record. One day, as he tells us, he was reading St. Paul's Epistles, and in a state of great mental conflict, had laid aside the book. Suddenly he heard, as it seemed to him, the voice of a child in an adjoining house repeating the words, "Take up and read, take up and read." He raised the book again and opened it. The place was the thirteenth chapter of Romans,

and the words that first met his eye were those of the eleventh verse, "It is high time to awake out of sleep." But a new light now fell upon the words, a light that penetrated his soul, and as he read he became consciously changed. In the case of this saint the words of Scripture were the light; yet though he had often before read the same words, they had no light for him till it was kindled by the Holy Ghost. There are different ways in which this light may affect the soul when first it enters. Sometimes it comes softly, a mild light, the day star rising in the hearts, and the mists of evil melting away before its holy beams, as the soul itself melts in the sense of the divine goodness and mercy; sometimes it is a terrible piercing light, showing the soul its own misery and the awful sanctity of God, making it thus feel the sentence of death in itself, and causing utter self-despair,—a light that is as darkness from its pure intensity. But in all cases it reveals to a man God and himself. Suddenly, for the first time, he sees what God is, and what he is himself; the glorious majesty of the most holy God, and the leprosy of his own sin. It shows him God and his own relation to this God, the recognition of which is the beginning of all reality in religion. As the candle when it is lighted shines in the house, discovering at once things invisible before,

so when this divine light shines in the soul, it makes the man know—not as a speculation, not as an opinion, or a doctrine, or a fact, but a present, vivid, abiding certainty—more certain to him than the earth under his feet or the sky above his head—more certain, if possible, than his own existence—for it is the foundation of that and all other creature existence—that God *is;* that He made us, that He is ever present with us, that we belong to Him, to do with us as He wills. It is an awful overpowering reality when it thus bursts upon the mind as it never did before, and everything else that exists seems to wither and die in its presence; but when the light comes, it seizes us, holds us fast, encloses and enfolds us, this consciousness of God — that we are and shall be always in the presence of the living God, our Almighty Creator and Judge, to whom our whole inner and outer life lies open, and from whom the most secret thoughts of the heart cannot be hid.

2. The entrance of light is the first step in the work of the Holy Ghost, and this is what the soul sees. Next follows *the sweeping*. The woman sweeps the house. The Latin version renders it, overturns—that is, upsets everything,—turns the house upside down; but the result of both is the same — confusion within. And what does this signify? It is the Holy Ghost showing a man his

sins. First comes the light, with the revelation of God, and of the creature to itself. But this is only the beginning. The soul must know itself, know what it is, and to this end its sins must be brought to the light; and this is denoted by the sweeping, which signifies two things—the special detection of sin, and the beginning of repentance.

First, the detection of sin. Before the light entered, the man was unconscious of his sins, like one in a dark house who knows not where he is nor what is about him. He knew of course that he was a sinner, as all men are, but he never thought about it,—the fact made no impression upon him, and if it was ever brought before him, he got rid of it by the general plea of God's mercy and man's weakness. Now at last he *sees* it; he sees that he is really a sinner; but what a sight! These clouds of dust that rise on all sides, the disturbance and derangement of everything in the house, show us vividly the utter confusion that fills the soul when the Holy Ghost begins to awaken it. Wherever it turns it meets nothing but a mass of disorder which it seems impossible ever to disentangle or reduce; sin within and without, sin past and present; clouds of sins rising everywhere, blacker from the contrast with the light of God that falls upon them and against which they struggle; thoughts, words, and acts

disregarded at the time, or never dreamt of as sin, now showing themselves in their true character; the sins of our childhood perhaps, the sins of youth, the sins of mature age; open and secret sins; sins against God, against man, against oneself; sins that seem so terrible in their multitude and in their complication that the soul can only say with the Psalmist,—"Fearfulness and trembling have taken hold upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me." "My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me."

Yes, those only who have experienced it can ever know what it is to see one's sins when God thus brings them to light. But this we do know, that the discovery has seemed to some too terrible for endurance. A well-known religious teacher of the last century, who had passed through the ordeal, speaking of himself, says that he besought God not to give him the sight of all his sins, for he felt that he would never be able to bear their full revelation. Not many, indeed, have had this agonising perception of sin, but to all the discovery when it comes must be an awful one. For it is the sight of what the man has never seen before—what he has been, and what he is. It is to see all his life perhaps set before him in a moment, as by a lightning flash illumin-

ating a picture. It is to see what *sin* is,—how evil, how base, how heinous, how audacious, how insane; and that this evil, this sin, is his own—part of himself.

And thus it would seem that the first effect of the sweeping is to make things apparently worse than they were before. So it is always when God begins to deal with the soul. But no condition is so bad as that of insensibility. "When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace"—that is, as long as Satan retains it under his power, so long the soul remains lapped in a delusive security. But a stronger than he has come upon him, and that security is at an end. All this disorder and confusion within the soul are the beginning of its salvation. We must see our sins, we must be brought face to face with them, and pass judgment upon ourselves, before we can truly repent of them. The soul must pass through fire and water before God brings it out into a wealthy place.

And now the house is swept and the dust subsides. That is, the first dismay and horror of the soul at the sight of its sins settles down and then deepens into compunction, and that sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of; so when the dust abates and things are restored to

their places, and not till then, the woman seeks diligently for her lost coin. That is, the Holy Ghost searches the soul, and with this the work of thorough self-examination begins. For we must distinctly remember that it is not enough to be awakened to that general sense of sin of which I have been speaking; this, however keen and vivid, is of no avail, and dies out unless it is followed by repentance; and to repent of our sins we must take them one by one, singly and separately. The search of the woman is a scrutinising search. We must seek out our individual sins, the sins committed at such a time and place, under such circumstances, whether alone or with others—never forgetting that God was present. We must inquire into all their aggravations, setting before us the details, fresh, vivid, burning; and this bringing them out to view distinctly and definitely, using all pains to detect them, not sparing or excusing ourselves, but honestly trying to discover the truth of what we are without disguise, partiality, or hypocrisy, can only be done by the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout, and this we must deeply feel if we would ever succeed. And therefore it is the woman, who represents the Holy Spirit, that seeks the coin. And so David, in profound consciousness of his need of this help, says, "Search me,

O God." He knows that all his own heart-searching is of itself but blind groping, that he can neither remember, nor detect, nor distinguish his sins rightly, that it is but lost labour to look for them with his unaided powers, and therefore when he has done all, he throws himself upon God with the cry, "*Search* me, O God; all my faculties need Thy help in this great work of self-judgment. My memory fails in the attempt to number the multitude of my sins; my understanding is too darkened to distinguish them, and I fear lest I should count those to be no sins which are indeed sins in Thy sight. My conscience is slow to acknowledge them, partial and perverted in judging. Do Thou enlighten, cleanse, control, and help all. Prove me, and examine my thoughts; look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But this is not all. There is yet something beyond the detection of sin and the beginning of repentance. The woman *seeks diligently* for her coin; and this is known by the impress it bears, and from which it derives its value; so long as a vestige of it remains this marks it as genuine. So it is with the human soul. What the Holy Ghost is seeking for all through are the traces of God's image in the soul. He is looking for that

signature and stamp impressed upon it at creation, renewed in baptism for every Christian, and still lingering on after a second fall as long as the hope of recovery remains. This is what the Holy Spirit is looking for in each of us, in order that He may restore it. Not indeed the image of God undefiled, for, alas, how rare are the souls in which this may be found! not the same features of it in all, but in whatever measure and degree, and however stained and obscured, some true lineaments by which that divine image may be verified. It was this that was found in the apostles when they were led to forsake father and mother and all that they had, and to follow Christ; and in the early Christians, who sold lands and possessions to give to the poor; and in the woman whose heart God opened to attend to St. Paul's preaching; and in the Philippian jailor, who washed the apostles' stripes, and was baptized with his house. In one man it shows itself by conscientiousness in his duties, in another by self-sacrifice, in another by humility, in another by meekness and patience. It is to be found in those who adhere steadfastly to truth under all temptation; in the tradesman who will forego earthly gain for the sake of honesty; in the young man who keeps himself undefiled by vice or impurity; in the perfect obedience of the little child;

in many and many an instance indeed where we might not expect to find it, but where God finds it,—among the poor, the ignorant, the helpless, those who have none of this world's gifts or advantages. These and such like are the traits of the divine image that shine out upon us for a moment as we pass on, and then are lost to view. You may have heard of the loss of the *Birkenhead*, which happened some years ago. When all hope of saving the ship was gone, the troops that were on board were paraded on deck, and stood in perfect order with their arms and accoutrements, as if they were on an exercising ground. Then all the women and children were committed to the boats and sent away safely. And then, when all these were saved, the ship, with its freight of men—each man motionless in the place where he was standing—went down to the bottom. Who would say that this act of perfect obedience and devotion to duty was not a genuine trace of God's image on the souls of these men?

And wherever such a trace is to be found the Holy Ghost will find it. The woman seeks the coin—*till she finds it.* These are the words of the parable, and how full of hope and consolation to all sincere souls! He will seek *till* He finds. He will not weary of the search. He will not remit or relax in the pursuit. He will not be

revolted by past sins. No accumulation of old habits, no depths of the soul can hide it from Him; He, the Searcher of hearts, will penetrate through all and recover what was lost. We are familiar with the story told by the ancient picture. A mother sees her infant child on the very brink of a precipice, from which one step would hurl it to destruction. She is not near enough to reach it. A single motion forward, a cry, a word, and it is lost. What does she do in the moment of agony? She opens her bosom, and the child springs to her and is saved. So is it with the Holy Spirit. He opens to the soul the love of God in Christ, and wherever a vestige of the divine image still survives, it answers to that love, as the shadow to the substance, bounds forward to meet it, and *is found*.

One word in conclusion. Search for this image in your own soul, and as you do, contemplate its perfect manifestation in Christ. The Holy Ghost will help you, and wherever you find the faintest trace, the dimmest shadow, cherish it as you would the most precious of all possessions; tend it, cultivate it, for in it is all the seed of future blessedness. Watch over every good and pure thought, every holy aspiration, every unselfish act, every sacrifice for God or man, and renew them again and again, and they will grow and spread; the

rust and defilement will pass from the coin, the pure metal will begin to brighten and shine forth, and the Holy Ghost will renew your soul after that image of Christ which all true Christians shall bear when He appears, and they shall see Him as He is.

XIII

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

I

"And he began to be in want."—LUKE xv. 14.

I NEED not inform those who hear me that the general purport of the beautiful story from which these words are taken is to represent to us the state of a sinner both in his alienation from God, and his blessed return to Him by repentance and faith. The introductory circumstances in connection with it are brief and simple. In the commencement of the chapter we find that our Lord had been exposed to the cavils of certain self-righteous persons among the Jews, because He received sinners and ate with them. On this occasion it was that the Lord spoke the three parables which occupy this chapter. In the two first of them God is represented as undertaking and accomplishing the whole work of seeking and restoring the soul of man to His favour and ser-

vice. The parable of the prodigal son, from which the text is taken, lays open to our view the mind of the penitent sinner himself, and discovers to us the feelings, the internal struggles and efforts, through which that mighty change is effected. In the former case, the power of divine grace is magnified, while man is represented by an object at one time irrational, at another inanimate; in the latter, we are taught that repentance does not take place without an earnest and vigorous engagement of the entire character.

The parable of the prodigal son may be divided into two parts, one of which describes his guilt and wanderings, and the other his penitent return to his father; it is upon the former subject that I propose to offer some remarks on the present occasion.

Our Lord has in this parable related the story of a young man who, eager to become his own master, leaves his father's house that he may see and enjoy the world, and after an interval of excess and suffering, returns to it a destitute, humbled, and supplicating penitent. Like multitudes of his age, he sets out in life full of self-will and imprudence, though perhaps without any intention decidedly criminal, and little anticipation of the guilt and misery in which the lapse of a

short period will find him sunk. We see him now, full of spirit and gaiety, with youth, health, and fortune on his side, hurrying away from home, expecting to meet with nothing but enjoyment in the world, and ready to purchase it at any price; and again, and quickly, we see him the victim of sin, beggared, broken down with want and suffering, his money gone, his gay clothing in rags, cast off by the world, oppressed with the burden of a guilty conscience, and affording an awful and impressive example of how sin is punished under the providential government of God. So far the story contains an important lesson to those who are exposed to similar temptations with this young man; but it no doubt admits of a far wider and more comprehensive application. And the leading features of this prodigal's character, and his conduct towards his earthly parent, are but too faithful a type of those which are displayed by mankind at large towards the universal Parent of all.

Taking the subject then in this wider view, we have in the first part of the parable a lively representation of the departure of the human soul from God. "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living." And here we

find a leading feature of apostate man. There was a time when man loved God; when he dwelt in his Father's house; when he found his happiness in conformity to the divine will; when his delight was in the commandments of his God, the voice of the Creator touched a responsive chord in the breast of the creature, and the current of obedience was spontaneous and unconstrained; when all was peace and purity in the heaven above, and on the earth beneath; when no cloud of sorrow had yet crossed the path of man, no danger invaded the tranquillity of his abode; when one voice of blended harmony issued from the whole frame of nature, and man, looking round upon all the inferior creatures, and enjoying undisputed dominion over all, had never yet wrested one from the end to which it had been originally designed by its Maker. But need we point to the contrast in the world around us? Man's will runs contrary to that of his great Creator; he disobeys the commands of God; he hates what is pleasing to God. The pursuits, the affections, the tempers, the whole spirit of inward purity and holiness, of faith and meekness and love, which are alone acceptable in the eyes of God he is a stranger to himself, and regards in others with contempt and aversion. He loves the world, its wealth and fame and business and

pleasure, the excitement of its pursuits, the unholiness of its maxims, the blaze of its deceitful glory,—and hence his life exhibits, in reference to God, the spirit of those words, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He wants to be the framer of his own destiny; he wants to live to himself, and to devote his time and powers to the pushing on of his own fortunes, and the indulgence of his own inclinations, independent of the God who made him. Here we see the radical revolt of man's soul from the Author of its being, and it is our familiarity with this revolt which prevents its profound evil from striking us as it ought. Must it not be the natural feeling of an upright creature that his happiness can be found only in conformity to the will of his Creator, and should not his constant aim be to employ every gift conferred upon him according to that will? Do the saints in glory look for any enjoyment independent of their God? Is it not their will and happiness to refer back to Him all that they receive, and as they cast their crowns before His throne to ascribe all honour and praise to Him that sitteth thereon? In what does the exaltation of any creature consist but in this, that he has no happiness but what God smiles upon, and that the will of his Maker is his also? Oh how deep is the fall of man when he can think it even possible

to find in that application of what he possesses, which his own appetites or passions dictate, the happiness which reason tells him can only be had in devotion to God!

And let me press upon you the plain inquiry which this consideration suggests—the great end of our redemption is that we may be made the servants of God. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Are you in the habit of viewing yourself as purchased with the precious blood of Christ, and regarding this stamp and seal of consecration to be set upon all that belongs to you? Is there anything you wish to consider as your own and not as God's? I do not now ask you what prayers you say, what religious studies or pursuits or duties you engage in; but I do ask, Have you devoted yourself to the Lord who bought you? do you seek to live to His glory, and employ whatever you possess to that noble end? Carry the application of this to your life; apply it to your time,—how much of your time do you give to the world, to business, to amusement, to relaxation, and refreshment,—and how much of your time do you give to God? Apply it to your exertions of body and mind, to your labour, your self-denial, your study,—in how

much of all this has God a share? Apply it to your influence; apply it to your money,—how much money do you spend upon yourself, upon maintaining your station in life, upon your own indulgence or that of your family, yea, upon the pomps and vanities of the world, and how much is devoted to God? Apply it, in short, to your entire life. If you are a true Christian you rejoice to think that you and all you possess are God's, and you would tremble at the thought of alienating any of His creatures from their rightful use. You seek His blessing upon your house, your property, your business; and in learning to live according to His will, that will gradually becomes your own. But if, on the other hand, such is not the principle of your life, be assured you have yet to become acquainted with the very elements of Christianity—a religion that demands the whole heart, the whole man, and rejects with scorn every lesser substitute that would be offered—a religion which can support our souls when the world is passing from our eyes, only because it teaches and enables us first to set our affections above the world, and to live as the children of that God into whose presence we must enter when we leave it.

But we soon witness other steps in the sinner's career. The father grants the request of

the younger son. "He divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." Not many days after—perhaps the few days during which the son still lingered in the house of his father, from whose authority he now felt himself emancipated, were a tribute of decency—perhaps a pause of compunction. He might have been struck, touched to the heart at the unexpected readiness with which his selfish and unreasonable demand was granted,—for nothing is more calculated to awaken our better feelings than to find that others are uninfluenced by narrow and selfish motives in their conduct towards us. He might have said, "Will strangers be to me what those I have known so long have been? Shall I find in this world which I am so anxious to enter, and in the sparkling pleasures with which it solicits me, the peace of life and of conscience which I have found at home?" And are there not seasons when men's hearts thus smite them on the brink of temptation, and their purpose is staggered—when God speaks to the soul, and brings up the strong emotions of our nature, and calls in the memory, the reason, the conscience, and affections to remonstrate with solemn energy against the steps they meditate—when the illu-

sions of sense and passion vanish for the moment, and the powers of the world to come break in upon their souls—when in the very heart of the world and all its blandishments, their eyes open to its utter vanity, and they feel that one day in their father's house is better than a thousand of the brightest it can offer—when they obtain, as it were, an anticipative glimpse of the end to which their present course is leading, and own the emptiness of the ordinary pleas by which it is defended, and the necessity of a great and universal change in their life? Yea, will it not come to pass that when a man is about to indulge some evil propensity, or take some decisive and long projected step, when every outward difficulty and obstruction is removed, even in that very hour it will seem as if a hand were laid upon him, and a voice sounded in his ears, calling him in awful tones to pause and weigh the consequences of what he is about to do? And thus does he pass sentence upon himself, and see, as in one view, the sin and folly of what he meditates, and the tremendous hazard of his soul's welfare; and it is only by acting in the face of these admonitions, and doing violence to his own convictions, that he falls. Oh, who can tell how much may depend upon these inward deliberations, when the powers of this world and of the world to come are struggling together in

the mind of man, and an opportunity is afforded to him of declaring which side he embraces, and will for the present abide by, or how often such moments in his life may form the turning-point of his condition, and determine on which side he is to be found at the last?

But to whatever we may attribute the delay on the part of this young man, it was but of short continuance. In order to indulge his pleasures undisturbed, he must fly not only from the restraints of his father's house, but even from the vicinity where he dwelt. He cannot plunge into sin and folly under the eyes of him from whom he has heard the counsels of wisdom and received the lessons of piety and virtue. "He gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." And do we not see in this the very picture and sample of the natural man? Till man is really reconciled to God, his constant effort is to live far from Him. True it is, we cannot leave our Father's house—we cannot remove locally from our Father's presence; in the nature of things, that is an impossibility. Into whatever region we may fly, in whatever employment we may be engaged, the presence of God still encloses us. "If I climb up into heaven," says the Psalmist, "thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also: if I take the wings of the morning,

and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." By day and by night, in society and solitude, in business and recreation, we are each acting our part before that Almighty Being, to whose scrutiny we are as closely subjected as if, individually, we formed the sole object of His attention in the entire universe. It is a stupendous though familiar truth that every man, at every moment of his existence, thus lives, moves, and has his being, acts, feels, speaks, and thinks, under the very eye of the great and holy God; and yet for all this, there is a melancholy sense in which man may be said to depart from God into a far country. Where the heart is alienated from an object, a wider and more hopeless distance is interposed than if mountains and seas were heaped between. It is not place that really separates the heart from the object of its love. People may be living at opposite extremities of the globe and yet their affections be closely drawn together; and they may, on the other hand, be living in the same house, with their hearts as effectually divided and their sympathies as entirely dissociated as if they were inhabitants of different worlds. Even so it is between man and his God. Though we cannot fly from Him, we may forget Him. Though he cannot find in universal creation that

retreat which shall enshroud him from the Almighty, he may divest his mind of all memory and sense of His presence; he may shut his eyes to the glories of the divine attributes broadly manifested around him; he may harden his heart to the tokens of the divine goodness so abundantly showered upon him; he may close his ears to those eloquent voices that, issuing from every object in nature, every event in providence, call upon man to study and adore the mighty Ruler of all. And thus may every closing day spread a deeper darkness over his mind, a more hopeless insensibility upon his heart, till God is at length as little recognised by him as if he were ignorant of His existence.

Yes, it is thus you may journey, for so much as you are concerned, into a far country from God and happiness. You cannot, indeed, change the eternal truth and reality of things, but you can—it is the awful power God has given you over your own destiny—you can bring yourself to the state in which, to you, they shall be as though they were not; you can dispossess your mind of the real fear of God; you can bid away from you the abiding recollection of His presence; you can turn your eyes from contemplating the tokens of His power and His love; you can forget that in Him you live and move and have your being,—

all this you can do. Every unholy day you pass, every wilful sin you commit, every temptation you yield to, is a deeper departure from God. Every remonstrance of conscience you stifle, every gracious suggestion you slight, you are turning your back upon that merciful Father, and, like the prodigal, taking your journey into a far country, from which, unlike him, you may never return. In his case the consequences were not long delayed. And now that all restraint is withdrawn, we see this unhappy youth at once carried away by his appetites and passions without check or control. We see him who was weary of the wholesome rule of a father's house plunged into all the debasement and slavery of sin. He "wasted his substance with riotous living."

But over the excesses of the prodigal we shall draw a veil. What needs it, indeed, to expose the scenes of riot and debauchery, of drunkenness and profanity, where man, half a brute and half a fiend, anticipates those abodes of woe and horror where sin maintains an eternal revel? What needs it to recount how time, and money, and health, and hope, and every virtuous habit, and every higher feeling, and every remaining fragment of the image of God in man is stained, defaced, and crushed, amid the ravings of the drunkard and the abominations of the sensualist—to point to

one who went out in life but a short time back with a father's blessing upon his head, who now in shame and anguish of heart can only wish that he had never been born—or to point to many upon whose bodies the Almighty has written the marks of His anger against sin, and who, with scarce the years of manhood, are sinking under decay and infirmities worse than those of age? And this is what men call indulgence—this is their pleasure—this they prefer to virtue, piety, and peace. Great God, Thy creatures choose for themselves, and fearfully are Thy judgments vindicated when we see the choice they make. They cast off Thy light burthen and easy yoke and take to themselves a grinding servitude; they reject Thee as their God and Father, and yield themselves the slaves of one who delights in their miseries, and even in this world repays them with disappointment and suffering, which are but a shadow of what is to come hereafter.

But the prodigal had not yet felt this. He was tasting what to him were the pleasures of sin. He must yet be brought to a sense of its pain and misery. The hours of wild indulgence were short, and those of remorse and suffering were at hand. We are told that "when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." Sooner or later it must come to

this with every living soul. They must be thrown upon the resources of that, whatever it may be, which they have chosen as their portion and dependence. Those who are sowing to the flesh —those who are living to the present world, in whatever shape it may offer itself—those, in short, with whom the favour and enjoyment of God are not the supreme object—have this prospect as certain to them as their own existence. They will find that they have been leaning on a reed which cannot support them. They will before long begin to be in want. Every other resource but God must, even in this world, be drained and exhausted. The possession of wealth, power, popularity, is precarious when attained, and in the pursuit beset with many a care and difficulty. Friends desert us, ties are broken, and there are a thousand silent and thoughtful hours in the life of man when he is bitterly taught the hollowness of every created blessing, and his need of One who may be both the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. In the watches of the night, in the season of trouble, on the bed of sickness, he feels his want of something more solid than the world affords to lean upon. And if there were not such periods, an hour is rapidly approaching when we must finally separate from it; and O what anguish does he store for himself who is preparing

this reflection for a dying hour! "I have lived to the present world; I am leaving it for ever. I have formed no solid acquaintance with the other, and there I am going. I have spent all and made no solid preparation for eternity. I know not what I shall meet beyond the grave, but all is impervious darkness to me. I have sinned against God. I have given those endowments with which He blessed me to other masters. Oh, where shall I turn—on what shall I lay hold in this day of my extremity, when I must leave that world to which I have yielded the service of my life as well as the chief place in my heart, and enter the presence of that God to whom I have madly refused to surrender either?"

Well is it for those who, like the prodigal, are made to feel this want in all its intensity before it be too late. It is at such a period of his story that we meet with the interposition of a higher hand for his deliverance. In the midst of his guilty excesses we read not of any warning sent to arrest him; but now that his property is exhausted, that his pleasures have come to an end, that his hold on the world is wrenched, the providence of God begins to deal with him for the chastisement of his sins and the salvation of his soul. It is when he has spent

all that there arises a *mighty* famine in the land.

Yes, there came the horrors of that most terrific scourge of which in these happier countries we are comparatively ignorant, when the energies of nature are bound up, when the earth from its withered bosom yields no sustenance, and all living things pine, and droop, and die with want —when man becomes desperate from his sufferings, and the ordinary compassions of our nature seem lost among the multitudes that wander about fierce and famishing, ready for any deed by which the torments that wring them may be appeased— when the tender and delicate woman that would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, in the madness of her own anguish has looked with an evil eye upon the child she has borne, and done a deed the mention of which is enough to chill the blood with horror.

We may conceive him for a while struggling with his destitution, and how one after another the relics of his former respectability are parted with to procure the necessaries of life, but this expedient could not long avail ; and we can fancy many a bitter struggle before the wretched man would dare to disclose to the others the extent of his necessities. We may conceive him first applying

to those who had been his acquaintances, and who, partakers of his pleasures and accomplices in his ruin, had made many protestations of friendship when he did not need them. But now in the hour of necessity he finds a bitter reverse. Some do not know him in his altered circumstances, some cannot aid him, and others will not. Insulted, humbled, heartlessly driven from door to door, his eyes begin to open to the world. He sees what its friendship is; perhaps with a bursting heart he thinks for the first time of home. But alas! regret will not now avail, and repentance has not yet come. His money is gone; he is fainting with hunger; want compels him to make any effort, to accept of any service, that will sustain his miserable life.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." This last stroke is perhaps intended to paint in the strongest colours the debasement and worthlessness to which man is reduced by sin. He is fallen from whatever is truly honourable or useful in existence. This wretched and starving swineherd had once all the advantages of wealth attending on him; the affections of an indulgent parent were his, the comforts and society of home were around him. And now what is he? Without food or shelter or converse, sent into the fields to tend an animal among the Jewish people emble-

matic of uncleanness, and glad to sustain his life by sharing the husks which they ate, while no man gave unto him.

Here, then, for the present we leave the prodigal, but we cannot do so without making a brief application of this part of his story. We have traced him through his errors, and if we have applied to ourselves the broad features of the character our Lord has delineated, there is much that must correspond with our past experience, and make the solemn application, "Thou art the man." From the guilty excesses into which he is represented as having plunged, we may, indeed, have been mercifully preserved, but can we not discover in our hearts and in our lives the operation of the same principles in his case so fatally developed? Have not we too wandered into a far country, lived without the fear, the love, the presence of our heavenly Father,—of Him who is doubly our Father by nature and by grace, and whose children we all were made one,—wasted but too much of the various portions He has endowed us with upon other masters, and in our blindness and ingratitude sought for that happiness in His creatures which is to be found in Himself alone? Have we never looked upon the world as our home, and suffered its transitory interests to occupy that place in our hearts which belongs to

God, and which He demands as His own? And how have we been rewarded? What has the world done to make us solidly happy? to what of its pursuits or enjoyments, even the most innocent and laudable, can we point and say, "This is worthy of an imperishable spirit; to this I can revert with satisfaction when I am entering eternity"? In the hurry of excitement and with the example of multitudes around you, and set out with near and sensible attractions, the world assumes an importance not its own. But weigh it in the hours of solitude when you stand in the presence of God—when you enter deep into yourself to ask what destiny is before you—weigh it in the scales of Eternity; and what is it? Lighter than vanity —more worthless than the dust of the balance.

Children of a heavenly Father—heirs of immortality, who shall outlive the splendour and majesty of this visible creation, who shall exist when sun and system have rolled into oblivion—lift up your hearts from the fugitive interests, the sins and pollutions of this fading world, to your heavenly home. You were never created for the little scene upon which you now are playing a transitory part. You have no kindred or affinity with the fleeting objects of time; there is a famine in the land; you can find nothing upon earth to satisfy your soul. Look up to God—look up to that bright inheritance

purchased for you by a Redeemer's blood—look up to the eternal world, from which but a slender veil even now divides you. There is that Saviour Himself who invites you to become His for ever—there, it may be, are some of those you have loved on earth—there an hour may find you. Oh, suffer not the low cares or the lying vanities of the present life, which is but a dream, out of which we must all soon awake, and which, whatever it promises, can only feed you with husks, the shadow instead of the substance, to defraud you of that eternal felicity so dearly bought, so freely offered to you. God has redeemed you for His glory and your own happiness, which can never be separated. These are the objects to fix your eyes and your hearts upon. Whatever your past sins may be,—whether with the prodigal you have wandered far and wasted the blessings with which God enriched you, and reaped in return for them shame and disappointment, or without his excesses, have exhibited the same fallen nature, living without God in the world and looking for the happiness of your soul among dying things in a land of want and famine,—whatever you have been or now are, there is mercy offered to you without money and without price. A Saviour invites you to turn to Him ; His arms are still open to receive you ; His blood can cleanse you from all your sins.

XIV

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

II

"And he arose, and came to his father."—LUKE xv. 20.

IN a former discourse upon the parable from which these words are taken we traced the prodigal through the melancholy scenes of his guilt and alienation from God, and in the task we have more or less traced our own individual history; for though the sins of all have not been the same, and there are many forms and shades in the sad picture of human corruption, yet all have alike wandered from their heavenly Father, and exposed themselves to the penalty of that strict and holy law which demands perfect obedience and requireth truth in the inward parts. A more pleasing subject now awaits us in the contemplation of the prodigal's return to his father's home and heart,—to God, to virtue, and to happiness, and the blessed change which led to it. May we all in

this likewise recognise our own experience, or may it, without delay, become our experience; and while conscious that we have too much resembled the prodigal in his guilt, may we enjoy the happy assurance that his repentance is also ours.

We left him at that period of his story when he is represented to us in a state of as great misery as this world, with all its varieties of suffering, has to show. He is far from home; his property is all spent; the country in which he finds himself is visited with the horrors of a famine; to support life he is compelled to betake himself to a laborious and degrading servitude; while even this is not sufficient to supply his necessities, and the representation of his misery is completed when we are told that no man gave unto him. Kindness has a power to soothe even the deepest distress, and they who cannot remove our sufferings may alleviate them by sympathy; but the unhappy prodigal has no friend to look to—none from whom to seek counsel or comfort; he is utterly alone, excluded alike from the solace of friendship and the assistance of charity; no man gave unto him.

And all this, we must observe, is but the natural consequence of his own misconduct. That one fatal step of departing from his father's house was the root of all his errors and the cause of all

his sufferings ; by doing this he exposed himself to temptation ; temptation and opportunity soon overcame his principles, and now he is eating of the fruit of his own ways, and reaping that which he had sowed. He had left a father's house, and he is without a friend ; he had wasted his substance, and he is in want of food ; he had lived in luxurious indulgence, and now he is sent into the fields, in a country where by day the drought consumes him, and the frost by night.

But, in the deep wisdom of God, it often happens that earthly calamities are employed as the ministers and instruments of spiritual mercies, and that the chastisement which brings us lowest in the world is also the means for bringing us to the entrance of the kingdom of heaven. Man, in order to be saved, must be brought to feel the evil of sin and the emptiness of the world, and to seek his happiness in God alone ; and this, in most instances, he will not do till forced to it by having earthly blessings one after another wrenched out of his grasp.

Hence it is that amid circumstances, so far as the present life is concerned, of the most utter wretchedness, we are called upon to witness the commencement of that mighty change in the condition of a human being called repentance—that change by which the soul of man is raised up,

enlightened, purified, and reinstated in the place which it has lost, made capable of solid happiness here, and immortal glory in the life to come.

Let us now observe the beginning of repentance as it is depicted in this story. The first movement to it is reflection. "When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" "When he came to himself"—for sin is not only moral evil, guilt, it is also disease. Sinners are in a sense beside themselves. In our Lord's own words—"They know not what they do." Engrossed by the sensible objects around them, they are ignorant of their own condition and heart, and entirely dissevered from that world whose realities are apprehended by faith and not by sight, and are to be laid hold upon by solitude and inward meditation. And hence when the Scripture would comprehensively describe the ungodly, it represents them as those who walk after the flesh, according to the course of the present world, who mind earthly things (in preference to heavenly), for this description embraces the whole mass of unrenewed mankind, with all their varieties of sin. And here we may see at once the great mercy of those chastisements which, when other means have failed, withdraw men for a time from the world, force them

to relax their hold of sensible objects, and give them the opportunity of reviewing their own state, and weighing the relative value of the life that now is and that which is to come.

Such was the first happy result of the prodigal's overwhelming calamities. In his solitude and want he does what, while the sunshine of the world was around him, he had never done—he comes to himself. The mists begin to clear from his mind, the delusion in which he had been living is gradually dispelled, a painful sense of the sin, the folly, and the shame of his past life begins to press upon him, and he is astonished, with the sentiments that now visit him, that he could have been a chief actor in scenes which leave upon his mind only a feeling of shame and loathing.

He comes to himself. There is no outward object to engage or distract him, no companions to drive away serious thought, no plans of enjoyment to fill his mind; the world that once bore him along with it has now retired, and left him to fall back upon his own resources; the deep solitude, the wide fields, the empty sky—all force the mind upon its own reflections, and compel it to draw upon the stores of memory, and revolve that past which cannot now be changed, and where men lay up for themselves what will form the

subject either of painful or consolatory reflection in the hour of their deepest necessity.

He comes to himself; he calls his ways to remembrance; he thinks of what he once was, and what he now is; he reflects—but alas! sorrow cannot bring them back—upon the blessings he has bartered for a short space of wild and guilty indulgence, which has left only bitterness and punishment behind; he retraces his past conduct in all the anguish of genuine humiliation, and bows, while he is enduring it, to the justice of that sentence which has reduced him to his present sad extremity. It was but a while since that the counsels of wisdom and the dictates of piety would have been received with impatience or ridicule; the world and its pleasures were everything to him—the only objects of value or interest; but now his estimate of things is reversed. How excellent, how happy does a life of purity and virtue appear! how enviable to possess a mind at ease, a conscience unburthened with guilt, a heart calm from the agitations of passion, the fever of desire, or the stingings of remorse, and occupied by peaceful and holy affections!

It is thus that we must be accustomed to retire within ourselves, if we would ever attain a just view of what we really are, and acquire the blessing of a truly contrite spirit. Never can we be

brought to a genuine repentance unless we know the evil within us of which we have to repent, and never can we know this but in the exercise of habitual meditation. It is no vague and general sorrow for our faults—too often extorted by their consequences alone—that will avail, but a deep view of the evil of sin, and as deep a persuasion, arising from profound self-study, that the evil in all its magnitude is our own. Till we steadily turn inward to seek this knowledge, we are only provoking the Almighty to rend from us those earthly blessings of friends or fortune, prosperity or health, which divert us from prosecuting the only important business of life. "Commune with thine own heart, and in thy chamber, and be still; enter into thy closet, and shut the door." When alone with God and our own hearts, in how different a light will our conduct, even our best conduct, appear, from that which falls upon it amid the stir of active life! how many things that seemed but slightly to be blamed, if not indeed defensible from the circumstances under which they occurred, will then appear entirely without excuse! and how many others that were looked upon as harmless, will press heavily on the memory and on the conscience! How much evil will you find in what you thought was good, and what subtle impurity of motive where you valued yourself on being

sincere? On every side you are assailed with temptations to forget yourself, to forget your destiny, to forget your God. And what must become of you if you oppose no habits of inward recollection to this torrent of distracting influences; if you suffer yourselves to be swept along without pausing to inquire how or whither you are borne, or what is awaiting you on that shore where your lot will soon be cast for ever?

But in recalling the past, that which especially visits and clings to the prodigal's mind is the recollection of his father's house: the thought of that home where his only days of purity and happiness had been spent, but from which he is now a distant and miserable exile. What a flood of remembrances that yet mingle sweetness with their agony gush upon his mind! Those he loved now far distant, perhaps forgetful of one so unworthy; the scenes familiar to his childhood, the very inanimate objects that from long acquaintance are almost endeared as friends,—all that is comprised in that word home, whose associations are capable of acting as magic on the human heart; and above all, his father, that father who had loved him, and whom he had forsaken. All the happiness of home, which he alone had clouded, and to which his heart now yearns,—all the depth of his present wretchedness, press upon him as

he breaks into the bitter exclamation, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Thus too it is that when the human soul is at length awakened to its true condition, when the woful bondage of sin is felt, and the vast wants of an immortal spirit, and the utter insufficiency of the world to satisfy them, the blessedness of religion rises upon the mind with an inconceivable lustre and attraction; it is recognised and hailed as the single star upon that awful ocean of existence on which we find ourselves launched; its immeasurable value is then acknowledged without a question or a doubt, the spirit turns with all its immortal affections towards its long-lost home. We see that there is a Father, and a Father's house, to be attained, and the cry that arises from the depths of the soul is, that the meanest of His servants is happy.

The result of such feelings may be easily anticipated. The grace of God is triumphant, and the resolution of the penitent is taken—"I will arise, and go to my father." Indeed to one awakened to a true sense of his condition, sin and separation from God are intolerable; and to be restored to the favour of that God, to regain the freedom of His service, no difficulty, no effort, no sacrifice, appears great. He resolves at every hazard of

failure or rejection to quit his present condition. "I will arise; I will leave this state of degradation and misery; I will break from the associations of guilt and shame that surround me; I will go to my Father, though I deserve that He should spurn me from His door; I will encounter all the pain to which my present condition may subject me; I will expose myself to whatever penalty He is pleased to inflict; but I cannot continue as I am, I cannot rest without pardon." Nay, he will do more than this; he will profess his readiness to undergo the punishment of being no longer treated as a son, and will acknowledge that by his guilt it has been fully merited. "I will say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." And while he is now on the way, let us dwell for a few moments on the marks of genuine repentance which are to be found at this period of his story.

The first of these is a deep and sincere sorrow for his past sins. This is manifested in his whole conduct, and this is an indispensable feature in true repentance. The true penitent is one who sorrows for sin more than for suffering, for the greater evil rather than for the less, for having offended God more than for any punishment he may have entailed upon himself by so doing.

The man who is furthest from religious or even moral principle may lament the consequences of sin. Our nature recoils from suffering, and when we are actually writhing under the infliction of those evils which our misconduct has drawn down upon us, we may deplore, and bitterly too, the errors to which they are due, without the aid of religion, or any feeling of penitence. Nay, we may at the very same moment be repining against God for what we have brought upon ourselves, and entertaining hard and rebellious thoughts against that holiness which has no pleasure in punishment, but which our own sins have armed against us. This is what the Scripture calls the sorrow of the world,—a sorrow which the culprit experiences when sentenced for his crimes, a sorrow which the lost spirits may feel when they contemplate their tremendous and unalterable destination. But the true penitent sorrows for sin itself. "I have sinned," he says, "against Heaven, against my Maker, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier, my Benefactor, my Judge." Every other circumstance in comparison with this is trifling; the glorious majesty, the infinite purity, the tender mercy of that Being whom he has offended, the awful sanctity of that law which he has broken, and obedience to which he feels must be life and felicity,—these are the considerations that touch

his heart. His sorrow takes its rise from what he is more than from what he suffers.

To this test let us bring our own repentance. In reviewing your past life, what is it you chiefly deplore? Do you regret,—for with the most prosperous much has probably gone wrong,—that imprudence has forfeited those temporal advantages you might otherwise have enjoyed, that indolence or error have lost you worldly opportunities that can never be regained, or alienated friends you could not spare? In short, is it for the consequences of sin you chiefly grieve, or is it for sin itself? Is the principal thing you lament in the past that you have been a sinner, and have offended God? Are you penetrated with compunction that you have not lived your whole life in the friendship and favour of God; that you have not loved, served, and glorified Him as you ought; and that whatever troubles you have encountered, have not been met in His service?

Entire humiliation and self-renouncement compose another feature in the prodigal's repentance. "I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." In repentance the proud heart is entirely brought down. Instead of seeking for palliatives, either to relieve his own mind or urge to his father in extenuation of his excesses—instead of persuading himself that he

had been overpowered by temptations which were irresistible, that the passions to which he had yielded were natural, and that he could scarcely be blamed for indulging them, that he had been perverted by example or seduced by persuasion, —instead of attempting by any argument or ingenuity to divert the weight of blame from himself, and thus to smooth the way of acceptance by trying, as many do, to make out a title to pardon, — he willingly submits to the whole burden of the guilt and shame which he has incurred ; he takes all the blame to his own person, traces sin to its source within himself, and acknowledges that his sole hope of pardon rests upon his father's goodness, and the only claim he has to offer is his own misery—"Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

And have you been led to renounce all dependence on your own infirmities on the one hand, as well as on your righteousness on the other? Do you see that the former can as little excuse as the latter can recommend you? Have you ceased to trust to your good deeds, your good dispositions, your good intentions, or, finally, to your repentance? And have you at the same time seen the evil of sin in such a light as not only to have ceased offering any excuse for it, but to feel in

the bottom of your soul that no excuse can be offered? Can you, in the shame and sorrow of your heart, confess your sins to God, and own that you have justly forfeited all title to His mercy? And where you have offended your fellow-men, can you as readily acknowledge your faults to them, and ingenuously throw yourself open to the blame you have merited?

Once more, and best, the repentance of the prodigal is marked by his returning through every impediment and difficulty to the ways of obedience, to the house of his father: "I will arise, and go to my father: I will say, Make me a servant." Repentance is a change of mind and of life, and the latter is the only infallible proof of the former. He who continues in the indulgence of a sinful habit, however great his sorrow, however deep his humiliation, however ready he be to confess to God and man that he has offended, has not yet obtained the grace of true repentance, for the penitent is one who forsakes not merely with the lips, but in the heart and in the life, every way that he knows to be displeasing to God; the fear of God is upon him, the hatred of sin is established within his soul, he is not deterred by apprehensions, by difficulties, by sacrifices that may be necessary, by any earthly consideration, from renouncing what is evil and adopting what is good.

To be at peace with God is the desire of the penitent soul, and he is ready to count all things but loss when balanced with the acquisition of so priceless a blessing.

It is with sentiments similar to these that the prodigal has undertaken his journey, and fully does he need in its progress all the support they can afford him. Represent to yourself for a moment this young man—his strength broken by hardship, his frame wasted with hunger, his whole aspect that of the most abject destitution—setting out on his long journey to his father's house. Can you trace in that melancholy form the animation, the buoyancy of spirit, the vigour which a while since it seemed as if nothing could exhaust? Yet pause again, and even in that changed and miserable object you will discover a better and nobler strength than any he possessed before. For what difficulties oppose themselves to his return! There are first the difficulties of the way: he has to travel from a far country on foot, exposed to fatigue and peril, and dependent even for support on the compassion of strangers; he must go alone, without guide or companion to direct his steps or cheer the solitude of the way. He may never reach home; he may perish with want upon the road, and no human being near to help him or close his eyes in death. Or if he is

able to accomplish the journey, then there are the difficulties that attend his arrival—the shame he must experience at the miserable guise in which he will have to present himself; the shame of meeting those who had known him in other days, and who will be thus made acquainted with the full extent of his guilt and folly; the shame of meeting his family—his brother, whose virtuous and dutiful conduct presents so humiliating a contrast to his own; all those struggles, in short, of lingering pride, which makes us so much more ready to disclose our faults or wants to strangers, if it must be done at all, than to those who have known us in different circumstances; and beside this, the fears which still would assail him that after all he may be rejected. How can he present himself before his father—he who has squandered that father's property, who, having received half his possessions, and thus diminished the comforts of his age, now returns to him a ruined mendicant, to tell him all is spent? Can he—dare he, indeed, hope to be forgiven? Will not the door be shut against the worthless offender? But no. He is worthless—he owns it in all the amplitude of the sad confession—but he has still a father. He knows—he trusts to his compassion. There is a strength within which nerves him to break through all difficulty, all fear,

all humiliation or suffering that he may be called on to endure. "He arose, and came to his father."

And in like manner the soul, touched by divine grace, answers every objection, surmounts every obstacle, and finds the way back to its God. There is a new principle within it which urges on its return, and whose elasticity nothing can repress. If a plant be confined within a chamber to which but a single ray of light can gain admittance, towards that one beam will it bend and struggle as if it had life within it to seek the presence in which it rejoices, and drink in the influences of the glorious element. And that human spirit which was made for God, if light from on high be permitted to visit it, will not rest till it gains that light, and imbibes strength, purity, and gladness from its influences.

He came to his father; and how exquisitely touching in its simplicity is the language in which the meeting between that father and son is described! "While he was yet a great way off, the father saw him." The heart is rapid in its movements; and changed and miserable as his appearance is, what can deceive a parent's glance? "And he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Then bursts from the lips and the heart of the son the penitent acknowledgment: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and

am no more worthy to be called thy son." But the father does not suffer him even to complete his supplication. He is forgiven ; he is restored at once. "He said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat, and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found."

And now there is joy in that house where but lately there was sorrow—thanksgiving and the voice of melody instead of mourning for one worse than dead. It is thus that religion, and virtue founded upon religion, wherever they come, bring peace and gladness with them. The land that is as a wilderness behind them becomes like the Garden of Eden at their presence. Religion is a restoring power within and without. It heals the divisions of this unhappy world, brings back children to their parents, and human souls to their God. Instead of sending us abroad to look for happiness, where it was never found, it gives it to us at home, and imparts a delightful relish to the simplicities of natural blessings, which all the dazzling pleasures of the world, if they were poured upon us, could never yield. With it pure and simple tastes recur to the mind ; and as it is one of the curses of sin that it perverts the desires, and ever leads

people away from themselves, producing an appetite for what is empty, artificial, and stimulating, so it is the blessing of religion that it leads us to forsake the hollow and heartless vanities of life, and to look for our enjoyment under God, in the cultivation of those ties which are the first to meet us on our entering the world and the last to leave us when we are quitting it. When the prodigal comes to himself it is to his father's house he returns, and in the occupations and affections and mutual charities of home he finds delights which he had never tasted elsewhere.

In the love of the father rejoicing over his penitent son, forgiving all the past without reproach, and reinstating him in the place he had forfeited, what is shadowed forth to us but the love of that God who willeth not the death of a sinner, who delighteth in mercy, whose nature is love? Are we touched with the traits which this earthly parent exhibits as he hastens to meet his guilty child, relieves all his apprehensions, forgets all his errors, and takes him at once to his home and heart? And yet to him forgiveness was an easy task, and in seeing his child safe and happy his own happiness was increased. But O what awe should mingle with adoring gratitude as it kindles in our hearts when we contemplate the love of Him who for our sakes spared not His own Son

from a humiliating life and a death of agony—as with all the powers of our souls we realise the overwhelming fact that we have been purchased with the life of an incarnate God! This is the costly price with which we have been redeemed—this is the proof God has given us of His love—this is the strong ground of confidence and consolation which the penitent has in drawing near to the awful majesty of the most holy God. How rich and plenteous above all we can ask or think is the provision of mercy which He has made for such as truly return to Him!

The best robe,—the restoration of that baptismal robe with which he was once invested when he was made a son. The ring on his hand—another token that he is not a servant, but reinstated in the place and honour of a son, and sealed by the spirit of adoption. The shoes on his feet—because he will now walk at liberty, his feet shod with the gospel offering of peace. And finally, the fatted calf and the joy of the feast, like the joy of the shepherd and of the woman in the former parables,—the feast the common symbol in Scripture of the full blessedness of religion here and hereafter. Such are the gifts which await the penitent—pardon and restoration, adoption, sanctification, and peace.

XV

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—2 Cor. viii. 9.

In this chapter St. Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to contribute to the relief of the poor Christians at Jerusalem. First, he tells them of what the churches of Macedonia had done. In persecution and poverty they had given even beyond their power; nay, they had given so largely that St. Paul was reluctant to accept the gift till they prayed him with much entreaty to do so. Then he urges upon the Corinthians that as they abounded in other endowments, spiritual and moral, so they would abound in this grace also. And then he checks himself, and sums the appeal by calling on them to give proof of the sincerity of their love, for he says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." No argument

could go above or beyond this. You may remember that when the Roman was accused of treason by his ungrateful countrymen, the only defence he offered was to point in silence to that citadel from whose walls he had hurled the invader. So it is with St. Paul here. He asks the Corinthians to help their poor brethren, and he asks it as a proof of the sincerity of their love to their Lord—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is enough to point to the great motive. Ye know it; and nothing can be added to the claims which this knowledge lays upon you.

Observe further the frequent and varied use of this word *grace* in the present passage. Indeed St. Paul seems to delight in the use of this word, and no wonder he did. We all delight in that to which we owe our best and happiest associations, and to divine grace St. Paul owed all he was and all he hoped to be. What is grace? Grace is a free undeserved benefit—a benefit conferred without any merit, claim, or title on the part of the recipient. Grace is opposed to debt, to hire, or wages, or anything a man can obtain for himself or establish a right to. It is a gift in the most absolute sense of the word. This is the sense in which it is used in the text. The grace referred to here is the infinite grace of the Incar-

nation. In the first verse of this chapter we have another aspect of the same word: "We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia." What was this grace? He tells us in the next three verses. It was the great liberality of these churches in the midst of their own distress, and the spirit in which they gave. So that their liberality to others was a manifestation of God's previous grace or bounty bestowed upon them; the gift of these churches to their poor brethren was, in the first instance, God's gift to themselves, both to will and to do. In the sixth verse, again, he says, "We desired Titus that . . . he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us; see that ye abound in this grace also." Here the grace or free gift of God in the first verse becomes a Christian grace, as it is called, in the person exercising it. Not a virtue merely; it is this, but it is much more. The moral qualities of Christians as such are not called virtues but graces; because virtues are human, and belong to the lower order of nature, whereas graces belong to that higher order, which is divine, and are the gifts of God's Spirit. And once more, we have the actual gift itself—the contribution for the help of the poor

saints—described as a grace in the nineteenth verse, where St. Paul says of Titus, "He was chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace"—namely, the funds entrusted to them.

Thus we have in this same passage four different aspects or applications of this word grace. We have grace as an external gift in the text; grace as an inward power in the heart in the first verse; as a moral quality to be exercised by the individual in the sixth and seventh verses; and finally, grace as the thing given by man, the fruit of what he had received, in the nineteenth verse. And in this last application of the word we have an instance of how the commonest things of earth are ennobled by the touch of Christianity, and even money may become a grace when divine grace prompts the gift of it.

Let us now turn to the text. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." The word grace, as I said, stands here for an outward gift; a gift, too, in which every one has a concern. This is what we all like to hear of. Our Lord has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The common view in the world is the reverse of this. Men think it more blessed to receive than to give. We are all indigent creatures in reality or in imagination; the greater number have many wants, and those whose wants

are fewest have only the more craving desires. And hence the words of the text ought to have an attraction for all. They tell us, in fact, of a gift absolutely and wholly free. Not hampered with conditions, not contingent upon what we are or what we do, not revocable. Given once, belonging to all mankind, and applicable to each —"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And the person of the Giver stamps its value upon the gift. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a grace bestowed upon us by God Himself; a gift from the eternal Son of the Father. All gifts must bear proportion to the conditions and character of the giver. The poor in this world can only give of their poverty; great men and princes do but consult their own dignity in the value of what they bestow; friends mark their affection by giving what they most prize; and when we hear from the apostle of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Him who is God, what can we expect but some surpassing manifestation of the divine goodness, some new miracle of God's bounty and God's love?

One more particular is added to enhance the value of this grace in that person of the Blessed Trinity from whom it comes. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—*our* Lord. Man was made in the image of God, and man fell. God

the Son took upon Him the restoration of fallen man and became our Lord. He redeemed us from misery and ruin, and is our Lord, because He has purchased us for His own. Not in the same sense as that in which He was Adam's at His first creation, when He formed his body of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man stood under heaven a living soul, the image of God, the last and greatest work of an Almighty hand. He was the Lord of Adam as He was Lord of all His creatures. But He is our Lord in a new, intimate, and most marvellous sense. He made us, and when we were lost He bought us back. He has given an inestimable price to recover us. He has taken us by His own power out of the abyss of a hopeless ruin, and made us a second time His own. This He has done for all mankind, for He has redeemed all; but He is *our* Lord in a peculiar sense, because we are Christians. Not only has He redeemed us, but we know it. Not only do we know it, but He has made redemption available to us, and has brought us into a state of salvation. There was a day when every Christian soul, when each individual in this church, was made His by special and solemn covenant; when as an infant you were brought to Him in baptism; when He received you to Himself, regenerated

you by His Holy Spirit, made you a child of God, and incorporated you into His holy Church. On that day you passed once for all from the state of nature in which you were born into the state of grace; you then became in your person the property of Christ, and He became your Lord in a new way; He set an indelible mark upon you, and an engagement was entered into, which He for His part is ready to abide by for ever, if you will abide by it on yours. The Christian who is saved will be saved with the mark of Christ upon him. The Christian who is lost will bear the mark on him for ever that he was Christ's once. Nor need I remind you how, since that day of unconscious blessing, most of you have ratified for yourselves the covenant then made, and presenting yourself to be confirmed by the bishop, have solemnly declared before God and His Church that you would continue, with His help, to observe your baptismal vow to the end of your life, and received the gift of His Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands to enable you to keep that vow. Nor how often, again, when kneeling at His altar to receive the sacrament of His body and blood, you bound yourself further, in the most pregnant words that man could utter, to serve Him as your only Lord, offering and presenting to Him yourself, your soul and body, to

be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him. Nor of the numberless forms throughout your daily life in which you have made the same acknowledgment, and repeated the same self-dedication. From the youngest to the oldest here you have done it again and again, each one for himself; in public and in private, in the prayers of the Church, in the recital of the Creed, in your private chamber when you were alone with your Lord; in the time of your prosperity, when your heart was full of gratitude for the blessings He had given you; in the time of affliction, or sickness, when you sought to humble yourself under His hand; in the time of temptation, when you had fallen, and again with earnest penitent prayers sought Him whom you had offended, your only hope, and solemnly pledged yourself to serve Him thenceforth truly. With what emphasis then may these words be addressed to us who are here now, "The grace of *our Lord Jesus Christ*"—ours by creation and ours by redemption; ours by covenant and acceptance; ours by repeated acknowledgments; ours by reiterated vows, pledges, and self-dedications! This God is our God for ever and ever.

Such is the person of whom the apostle speaks in the text; and next he proceeds to describe the grace or gift which He has bestowed. "Though

he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." "Though he was rich,"—what are the riches to which St. Paul refers? They are the riches of Christ's eternal Godhead. Read the Epistle and Gospel for to-day. He is the Word, Who in the beginning was with God, and Who was God. He is the Son; the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. By Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made. He is Heir of all things, and upholds all things by the word of His power. To Him it is said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. In the beginning He laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands, and when they shall perish He is the same, and His years shall not fail. Language is inadequate to describe, nor can thought approach the conception of what the apostle represents under these short words—"He was rich." There are two senses in which any being may be rich—in his own personal qualities or attributes, and in his works or possessions. Our Lord was infinitely rich in both—rich in His own supreme and absolute perfections as God, and rich in the whole creation, of which He is the Author and Owner. Suppose you were raised above this earth on which we live, and enabled to contemplate in order the whole extent of its circumfer-

ence,—its continents and oceans, its mountains and plains, its seas and rivers, its thrones and kingdoms; its armies, its fleets, its multitudinous population; the cities of treasure, the navies of merchandise, the mines of gold and gems, and those richer stores of metal and mineral by which human industry has conquered nature and opened new realms of rule to man; all that power, opulence, and splendour that are accumulated upon its surface,—and when you had surveyed all this, you were told that the whole was the property of one being. Suppose you were carried still further, and as this vast globe receded and lessened in the distance, you were to behold another greater and brighter world rolling on its majestic course through the boundless regions of space; suppose that, when this too had passed, another and another splendid orb swept by, each developing in its approach all the glories of an unstained creation,—skies of a serener radiance, fields of a fairer beauty, new colours, new forms of life and nature; and that still other worlds continued to pour along in bright and endless procession—suns, stars, systems, clusters, and constellations—till the eyelids dropped and the memory failed beneath the weight of an interminable numeration; suppose you were raised still higher to behold the mighty and magnificent hosts of God,—ranks and orders

of intellectual creation ascending one above the other in grades of glory, angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—and when it had reached this height, your fainting spirit became conscious that the ascent was but beginning, that it still did but tremble at the footstool of a scale of inaccessible and unutterable splendour; suppose that, amid the central excess of that blinding glory, you were pointed to One bearing the form of the Son of man—One bearing on His hands the marks of nails, and on His side the mark of a wound—and it was proclaimed, "He is Lord of all, of men, of angels, of all beings and all worlds; the sceptre of His almighty rule stretches through every region of an unmeasured creation." Yet even this would convey but a feeble comment on the apostle's words when he says of Him, "He was rich." For we are weak and blind creatures. We cannot speak, we cannot think, of the greatness of Christ as we ought. Our best acknowledgment is to bow the head in silence and adore.

It is more possible for us to enter into the meaning of the next words, "For your sakes he became poor." We cannot approach the thought of the glory of the riches of Christ, but we can all understand what poverty is. But what does this mean? He is God; and God cannot be less

than God, and continue to be God. His divine perfections do not admit of decrease or limitation. The infinite riches of His own nature must be ever infinite. He is the Maker of all things and the Upholder of all things which He has made. He may destroy, but He cannot alienate; for to withdraw His support from any creature would be its annihilation. And if He were to destroy He would not be less rich; for the resources of the Creator are inexhaustible, and at His will He could replace what He had annihilated. How then could such a being, in any conceivable sense, become poor? There was but one way in which it was possible. God might shed upon us the wealth of an entire creation, and yet remain as rich as before He gave it. He might create and give again and again, while His own riches would remain the same and undiminished. To give is nothing with God. And as God He could not become poor. There was one way, and one way only, in which this could be. It was possible to God to do it, and I may dare to say it,—He could give Himself. He could take to Himself a created nature. He could unite that nature to His own person, so that He would be at once the infinite, unchangeable God and the creature whose nature He assumed to Himself. Thus, and thus only, could God become poor. But think, as far

as you can think, of the impoverishment involved in the union of the two natures,—that of God, and that of any creature. It would have been poverty if Christ had assumed to Himself the nature of the highest archangel—of whatever creature stands at the very summit of all creatures—for the distance between the Creator and the highest creature is greater than that which separates the highest from the lowest in creation; nay, it is infinite; and to have bridged over the distance by uniting that nature to Himself and becoming one with His creature would have been an infinite humiliation and impoverishment. But He did more than this—He became poorer still. He took not upon Him the nature of angels. He went down lower, and took our nature. He became man. He came into this world as man. He was borne in the womb of the blessed Virgin. He came upon earth in the poorest, weakest, most helpless form that is seen on earth,—that of a human babe. He was carried in the arms of His own creatures. Nay, when He came thus among His own creatures, they had no room for Him. He was laid in a manger at His birth, and had His place among the beasts of the field. So He became poor.

And it was for our sakes that He did so; for all men and for each, for your sakes and mine.

Not for His own; not because He stood in need of us; not because His glory would have been impaired, His majesty dishonoured, His dominion curtailed by our loss; not because we were worthy of it—for what creature could be worthy of this, that his God should for his sake become poor?—not because there was any intrinsic value in man, for he was a sinner, wilful and rebellious. He did it for our sakes. These are pregnant words—words to take into our very heart of hearts and feed on them—"*For your sakes he became poor*,"—out of His own exuberant, all-pitying love. In spite of all unworthiness, all rebellion, all wrong, the fountains and depths of the divine tenderness were moved for our sakes; His infinite compassion yearned over the works of His own hands, what His own fingers had made; the souls which He had created, the bodies into which He had Himself breathed the breath of life, in bondage to sin and to the devil; over His own shattered image in man, which no one but Himself could restore, and He only by this stupendous sacrifice of love, "For your sakes he became poor." And now we come to the last words of the text. "He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Mark the contrast here. He who was infinitely rich became poor, that we who in the extremest sense are poor, might by His

poverty be—what?—not merely *saved*—though this would in itself have been a wonderful result of His humiliation—but be rich; it is the same word applied before to Himself and to the riches of His Godhead. He became poor then that we, His poor creatures, might be enriched with the riches of Deity. Every act of His humiliation conferred a corresponding gift of riches upon us. By taking upon Him our nature He poured a new tide of life into humanity; His life upon earth bequeathed to us the riches of His all-perfect example; His death upon the cross purchased our redemption; He has enriched us with the gift of His Spirit; He has made us sons of God; He feeds us with His body and blood; He has made us members of His mystical body the Church, and supplied us with all gifts of grace and help necessary for our life here. He has promised to raise us up at the last day, and give us the gift of eternal life; to give us the crown of life, glory, honour, and immortality—true riches—treasures in heaven—a kingdom that shall not fade.

And now I will add but two words in conclusion.

1. Your God became poor for your sakes. Let this be engraven on your heart and shown in your life. This is your religion. We can see from this, not the value or the excellence of

humility, but the necessity, the absolute necessity of it. No man *can* be a Christian, can be a follower of Christ, who is not humble first. "Take my yoke, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "Be not high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate." Pride and faith in the Incarnation cannot coexist. We must never talk or think of not lowering ourselves, of not being able to bear slights or insults. We must always try to take the lowest place in our own thoughts, as well as outwardly, when we can; and whenever pride begins to swell, kill it by the thought of the manger and the cross, and the infinite glory of Him who yet for our sake became poor. When some converts from heathenism were employed in translating this passage into their own language, they paused—and then they said, "Let us not write this, but say, 'That it shall be permitted to them to kiss His feet.'"

2. And again. "He became poor." Now I do not say that we are bound to *become* poor, though men have done so in every age. Men, and women too, have sold all that they have and given to the poor—they could not help it; they have to love poverty, to look upon it as something beautiful and attractive, for His

sake. But I do say that we are bound to live as sons of God, to live such pure, simple, unworldly lives as will show to whom we belong—in a word, to show that we belong to the Son, by living as sons of God, and then, when He shall appear, we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him.

XVI

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—MATT. xvi. 26.

IN the twenty-fourth verse of this chapter our Lord laid down the fundamental law of His kingdom when He said to His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." But self-denial is a constant renunciation of the objects without and the desires within us, and is the unmistakable symbol of suffering and death—the dying of the old man in all his carnal lusts, and the rising of the new man to follow the Lord of Life after the pattern of His life. And St. Paul expresses the accomplishment of this in his own person when he says of himself, "I am crucified with Christ"—I have been once mystically, and am habitually always—"nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the

flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Here is the death and the life fulfilled; the self-denial, the cross, and the following Christ.

In the next verse our Lord states that Christian paradox: "*For* whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." What is the meaning of this? How can a man lose his life by saving it, or find his life by losing it? The key to the saying is given in the preceding verse. To follow Christ we must deny *ourselves*, and to deny ourselves is to renounce in daily detail those objects or aims which make life attractive to the natural mind; and what is this but to lose life and, as the apostle says, to die daily? Or again, we may be called upon to give up life itself at a single stroke for the sake of Christ. Now we may save this life in either of these two senses. We are not indeed likely to be called to martyrdom, yet even of this there have been instances in our own day; but when the claims of duty and the array of temptation present themselves each day, when the broad and the narrow road lie before us, we may all choose the one and refuse the other,—that is, we may save our life for the present world, with its indulgences or gains, but if so, we lose it—we lose the true life, the life of our life here and here-

after. While, on the other hand, if we are content to lose this world's life by daily renunciation and self-denial, we shall find to our wonder and joy another and better life here, and one that shall survive death; and this is the life of the soul, and all this is fulfilled in the natural life. The child loses the life of his childhood to gain the fuller life of youth, and again the young lose that life to gain that of maturity. Everything that grows, everything that makes progress, parts with what it is at first in order to assume something higher. So that by losing the lower life, parting with it voluntarily and in daily acts of surrender, we gain the higher; and by saving the lower, cleaving to it in act and deed, we lose the higher. Only we must remember that we cannot have both lives—we must choose between them.

Our Lord having thus brought us to that which is real life, and shown us how it may be certainly gained or lost, proceeds in the text to put the case distinctly between the two lives of which He had been speaking: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world"—all that the world can give, all the goods, all the enjoyments of this life—"and lose his own soul?"—which is emphatically his life—"or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—how shall he recover it if it is once lost? What is

there of value enough to repurchase it? Would it be worth while to give it for the world if the world could not buy it back again?

In the text then a case is put for the decision of our own judgment. Two objects are placed before us, and we are called upon to pronounce on their comparative value, and to make our choice accordingly. These two objects are the world and the soul—the whole world and our own soul. It is assumed that we may have either, and it is certain that we cannot have both. Which of them is the most valuable? What would it profit a man if he were to gain the former and lose the latter?

But what does the expression, "The whole world," signify, and what is meant by gaining it? Now there is a certain sense in which it is possible for a man to gain a share of the world, and it is in this sense that the words are commonly explained. Every one has some object or objects in life, be they greater or less, and these to all intents and purposes constitute the world to him. They are all he wants from the world, and all it can give him. The lovers of pleasure care little for the profits or honours of the world, except so far as they contribute to their enjoyment; those who are absorbed in graver pursuits despise its pleasures, and so, according to their respective

tastes, is it with all. Each man has his own world, his portion—it may be very small—chosen out of the great mass, and to gain this would be in his case to gain the world. Such is the usual way of understanding the text. Suppose a man were to have all he wants and all he wishes from the world—money, pleasure, ease, honour, the fulfilment of all his desires, and the realisation of his hopes—what would it profit if he were to gain the whole and lose his own soul?

But in point of fact, though it is of course possible for a man, either from the moderation of his desires, or by some happy combination of circumstances, to obtain from the world all he cares to have of its gifts, yet the instances of such success, if any, must be rare indeed, and I suppose that none of us have ever met with one who professed to be perfectly satisfied with what the world had done for him, and asked for nothing more. Observe, I am speaking only of those who are seeking their happiness from this world and not from God. Religion necessarily brings contentment with our earthly lot, because it teaches us submission to the will of Him who disposes all things, and because it supplies us with gifts which the world cannot touch or impair; but among those who are not under the genuine influence of religion, where shall we find one who, let his

wishes be ever so moderate, is at this moment content with the way the world has treated him, and ready to forego all claim upon it for the future? I do not of course discuss the reasons of this—your own experience bears witness to the fact; and therefore, though it may be possible, it is most improbable that any one living will ever get from the world even that limited share of its good things which he is looking for. It is not necessary then that we should take that narrow view of the world on which the interpretation in question proceeds. A man really may lose his own soul and yet not have gained the world in any sense at all. The case which our Lord has put is between the value of the world and the value of the soul, if the former were gained, but does not imply that it ever has been, or ever may be, actually gained by any one. So that there is nothing to prevent our understanding the phrase in its largest sense; not merely as applying to what each man could gain from the world if it gave him all he seeks, but as representing what a man could have if it gave him all it has to give; not only as exhausting all the desires of the individual man, but as exhausting all the resources of that grand object upon which all the earthly aims of the entire human race are centred.

I may therefore consider the terms used in the text according to the fulness of their literal meaning. To gain the whole world actually, although it may not be possible, is at any rate conceivable, and as there is no reason why we should not follow the words into all the extent and amplitude of their meaning, so to do this is more consistent with the reverence due to our Lord's words, and the awful import of the question He proposes. Consider then, in the first place, what it would profit a man if he were to gain the whole literally and actually—what, in short, it is that in such a case could be gained. Let us try to follow out this conception as far as it will carry us.

1. Now probably the first thought that would suggest itself to us in connection with this question of gaining the whole world is the thought of power. To gain the whole world would be, as far as this world is concerned, to gain an unbounded power. It would be a power extending without limit or restriction over the surface of the globe; it would be to fill a throne loftier and more stable than king or potentate ever ascended; it would be the dominion of the whole earth. Men have aimed at what has been called universal empire, but it was no more than a sounding name, and the thing itself as fleeting as it was pretentious and unsubstantial. God, as if to mock man's

pride, has smitten it at its height by means of the commonest or weakest instruments. The greatest armament of the ancient world was checked by a few hundred men; the hosts of a modern spoiler were swept away by the snowdrifts of a winter. History is full of instances, and resounds with the crash of falling thrones, and the overthrow of ill-compacted empires! But this of which I speak would be a power such as the world had never seen before, nor the dreams of ambition in its most daring flights ever presented. It would be in sober earnest an universal empire. It would embrace all continents with their kingdoms, and all oceans with their islands; the swarming city, the trackless wilderness, the keen energy of civilisation, the rude force of barbarous life; the glowing South and the frozen North, the East with its ancient traditions and changeless forms of life, the West with its exhaustless vigour and its daring struggles for new states of social existence. It would combine, each in its most perfect state, all the elements and materials on which man has ever built the stability of power, as the majesty of law, the strength of opinion, the command of men, the resources of wealth, the splendours of outward pomp and glory. It would command all the armies of the earth, and all its fleets—all the sap and life of its innumerable popu-

lation. It would be served by the most consummate statesmen, the wisest legislators, the greatest captains. It would rule without a rival on sea and land, in city and in field ; one standard floating over ten thousands of citadels, one flag blown abroad in all the harbours of the ocean. The fiction which modern society is trying to accept, that rulers represent the ruled and the ruled rule themselves, would have no place here. This would be an absolute monarchy. One hand would hold the sceptre of the earth, and people, nations, and languages would receive the law from the lips of one. Resistance would be impossible where the power of the whole world was concentrated in a single person, and the wildest and most lawless natures would be constrained to bow before its image as by the hand of a resistless destiny. Nor is this all. It is but a rude and unwieldy power compared with what the discoveries of modern times are placing at the disposal of man. A new page has been opened in his history. One wonder after another flashes upon him with the brightness and rapidity of lightning. Time and distance give way. By one agent the ocean is bridged over, and the remotest countries brought into comparative proximity. By another the globe may be encircled, and a message conveyed to the most distant spot as speedily as it once was to

the next street. We seem to stand at the portal of an era when such power as I have spoken of would confer upon its possessor the rule as of some superior intelligence, passing from land to land in hours instead of days, and communicating with the farthest quarters of the earth in moments instead of weeks or months.

2. And such power as this which we are supposing would include, in the next place, the command of the whole world's wealth. To gain the world then would be to become sole master of all the wealth which the world contains. And though this is included in the notion of universal dominion —for to rule the world is to rule all its resources —still it admits of being viewed distinctly and separately. Consider then what it implies. We have sometimes heard of exorbitant fortunes, of untold riches, and in the narrow and comparative sense in which such expressions are employed we can understand what they mean. He who in the wantonness of an insane prodigality expended the revenue of an entire province on a single supper, made a display of wealth which might fairly be considered exhaustless, yet it sinks into utter insignificance or to the level of poverty when compared with what is suggested to us here. The wealth of one who should gain the world would be unbounded wealth, or have no limit except

the resources of the world itself. To such an one would belong everything here that money represents and everything that it can purchase. He would command the riches of all the earth, the revenues of all its countries, gold, silver, and precious stones, whatever circulates among its peoples, or is borne in ships, or is deposited in the treasuries of kingdoms. He would be master of all the riches of its produce, natural and artificial; corn and wine and oil; all the fowls upon the mountains, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; all merchandise and exchangeable commodities; all the precious works of man, where labour and skill infinitely enhance the value of objects in themselves most precious. He would have power over the whole surface of the globe, and could rifle it of its hidden treasures. He could strip the mountains of the gems and jewels with which God has adorned them from their creation. He could lay bare the mines and bring to light their costliest stores. He could search the depths of the ocean for the vast riches that they hide, and of all this wealth, wherever found, he would be the sole and absolute disposer.

3. And once more, he who should gain the whole world would have command of all the pleasures this world can yield—pleasures of the senses and of the mind, animal and intellectual.

All quarters of the globe would minister to his enjoyment, and each country and climate would pour its rarest productions in lavish profusion at his feet. He could live in luxury such as had never before been imagined or dreamt of by man, and if he chose the higher enjoyments of the mind, then he could summon around him all those who anywhere on earth were eminent in literature or in art—poets, painters, musicians, philosophers, scholars, men of science—and feast sense and thought upon the most exquisite results of art, the highest productions of human genius, or the wonders of nature which science daily brings to light.

This is the case which our Lord has put in the text—the case of one who should be the owner of this terrestrial globe ; who should rule it as one empire ; who should own it more completely than a man owns his property or estate, the master of its population, its produce, and its contents, and commanding every pleasure which the extent and fertility of its resources could supply.

To gain the whole world then would be to gain all this, carried out into all its details. I do not now dwell on the fact that to use such a possession, still more to enjoy it, would in itself demand superhuman endowments ; that solely to rule the world would tax the capacity of the

highest genius, and be a burden too heavy for the most vigorous powers. Nor do I say that beyond a certain limit all the wealth and all the pleasures of the world would be absolutely useless to him who could command them; that as a vessel cannot be filled beyond its capacity of containing, so man's powers are bounded on every side, and the strongest soon come to the end of their strength and are weak. There is a story told us of an Egyptian king—one Mycerinus—to whom it was announced by an oracle that he had but a single year to live. Resolved to double the time thus left to him, we are told that as each sunset approached he caused palace and garden to be lit up till they blazed like day, and so night and day became one in continuous light and uninterrupted festivity. But he who told the tale had forgotten that man must sleep, and human infirmity would not permit that life should be so lengthened. But I do not dwell on this. Neither do I say anything to detract from the intrinsic value of the great object itself, although one who came nearest of any on earth to realising the supposition in the text bears this awful testimony from his own personal experience to the world and the worth of it: "I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of

spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." I repeat, I do not insist on this or on anything of the kind. I take the words in the text as they are spoken. Suppose it were possible for a man to gain the whole world in the fullest sense which the words will bear; and suppose also, in order to carry out and complete the supposition, that he could enjoy all that he had gained; that he had capacity and powers for universal dominion, for administering unbounded wealth, for enjoying all earthly pleasures in all their forms, and that life was prolonged to its furthest limit to enable him to do so. And now comes the question—What would it profit him if he should thus gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

This is the other object which Christ sets before us here—the soul. And the question implies the answer. The whole world and all it contains; and the more gigantic its dimensions, the more overwhelming in their magnitude and magnificence its contents, the more it enhances the meaning of that answer—all is not of such value as a single soul—as the most benighted, the most ignorant, the most fallen and debased soul that has its abode in the form of man.

And all hearts and souls echo the truth. All of us have an awful consciousness within—a consciousness that no heedlessness or levity can

smother of the priceless value of the soul, and the vastness of the career that is open to it. We all feel it, first, because we know that this world and its contents, whatever be their value, must come to an end, that this whole system which surrounds us is only temporal and the soul eternal. I do not say merely that we ourselves must leave it, but that it must die. The day will come—is rushing on—when all the power, glory, riches, honour, pleasure of the world will have ended for ever. Its days are numbered and measured out every one and their term is fixed. They may be prolonged for centuries or they may not be—God knows—but there is a last day determined, and that day will come. And when that day comes the soul will be still in its prime. The earth will wither and dissolve, the sun will burn out, the stars will disappear, the whole visible system will give place to new forms of existence, but the soul will still possess immortal vigour and live on when the world is dead and forgotten.

2. And we feel the value of the soul still more from this which the question in the text suggests, that our souls are *our own.* This awful treasure is ours. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the world, and lose his *own soul?*" Your soul is your own, and it is the only thing you can call your own. Your house, property, family, friends,

health, strength, powers of mind and body, your life itself is not your own; your soul is. His *own soul*—think of these words. It is thy soul, thine own soul, of which they speak. Think of what it would be to *lose* this. Thou canst not think it. All that human thought or imagination could conceive would be inadequate and mean, for it would take eternity to understand. Only One understands the worth of the soul—He who redeemed it, He who spake the words in the text, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And now, if we feel that we should be losers were we to gain the whole world and lose our own souls, let us, in conclusion, take this plain lesson with us. Do not lose them for *less*. You will not be offered the world for your soul, and if you were, you would reject it. But you will be offered, and are offered *less*, and you *are* in danger every day of accepting the offer. Satan offers you, and all, your portion, your small share of the world; its pleasures that corrupt, its cares and distractions that choke the seed, its temptations to self-indulgence and neglect of God in any and every form that may suit your temper or condition; he offers it to you in some shape every day, in private or in public, alone or at your business. In a word, he wants you to *live* more

or less for this present world, to think of it, to serve it, to be given up to it, at the sacrifice of what is good for your soul. You would not part with your soul for the whole world—will you part with it for the little you can get? This is the question.

When the steamer *London* was lost some years ago on the English coast, among the many sad tales told in connection with the shipwreck, I recollect reading of one, in some respects the saddest of all. When the condition of the ship was hopeless, one of the passengers had gone down to his cabin, which was already under water, and had with some difficulty found his trunk, which he had carried up to the deck and was sitting upon it. The captain, who was standing by, waiting in silence for the inevitable catastrophe, saw what this poor man had done, looked at him, and shook his head. He had saved his trunk.

How many are there, men and women, at this time in Dublin—how many may there be in this church—who are saving their trunk, while their life—the life of their soul—is in mortal danger?

XVII

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."—MATT. xxvii. 25.

WE know well whose words these are. We cannot hear them read in the Gospel without a shudder. When the Jews uttered this tremendous imprecation we know that they rejected their God and Saviour, who had come to them, and was then present among them. He had offered Himself to them, and they rejected Him with circumstances of outrage, of ignominy and abhorrence, which even a guilty fellow-creature might be spared. And we know too that their self-pronounced sentence has taken effect and been carried out ever since that day. For 1800 years the nation has suffered the penalty which was then invoked, without remission or abatement. They ceased to be God's people, but they did not cease to retain their separate existence as a people. Other nations have been punished and

made an end of. The Jews have been kept alive by means of their punishment; their punishment has been their preservation. For those centuries they have been maintained in a miraculous and Cain-like existence. Scattered everywhere, yet no man slaying them; bearing always a living, palpable, though reluctant witness to Him whose blood has been on them and on their children to this day.

In these words then, and in the fulfilment of these words, we read of a sin and a judgment which stand alone in the world's history. The darkest records of human guilt grow pale and fade almost to the hue of innocence beside the darkness of this deed. If our Saviour Himself said that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for the cities which saw and rejected Him, what is to be thought of the guilt of that city who saw, rejected, and crucified Him?

It needs no lengthened explanation to make this clear to us; we all feel it. Indeed, so instinctive and strong is the feeling that it brings a new danger. The sin of the Jews stands out before us now as something almost superhuman in its solitary atrocity, and seems to place them wholly out of the sphere of ordinary offenders. We see men doing what no other men ever did, and what we know that we ourselves can never

have an opportunity of doing,—and what follows? I suppose there is not one of us but thinks that if he had been living when these things happened, if he had been a contemporary of the Jews who rejected our Saviour, he could never have been a partaker of their sin—he would surely have been found among the followers, not the enemies, of our Lord. This feeling is natural, but at the same time, as it is a feeling which would probably be shared by all Christians, no matter how much their lives were opposed to the religion they profess, we should on this account alone have good reason to regard it with suspicion. Here is a crime which, in the nature of things, could be committed by men only once, and they *did* commit it,—what should be the obvious inference? Surely this: either that the nature of those men who took part in the crucifixion must have differed in some essential respect from our own, which we know it did not; or that their sin was one of which our common nature is capable. I am ready to go this far, and to admit that if, on comparing our own character and life with what we read of those who rejected our Lord, we can discover a marked difference between them and ourselves, then indeed it is not likely that if we had lived in their day we should have taken part with them in their dreadful act.

The event with which the holy week opens is our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Four days before the feast of the Passover, on His approach to the city where He was to suffer, He sent two of His disciples, "Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. . . . And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them. And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Such was our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and the enthusiasm with which He was received by the people. The only dissentient voice was that of the priests, who, mad with envy, dared only to betray it in the faint remonstrance, "Master, rebuke thy disciples. Hearest thou what these say?" and were silenced with the words, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." They had no sympathisers, therefore, among the bystanders

then. The entire body of the people was with our Lord, and shared in the triumph and rejoicing.

Four days pass, and in that little space of time all is changed. Our Lord now stands bound before the Roman governor. The people have wholly deserted Him and joined His enemies. Out of all the crowds who followed Him with acclamations not one now stands forward in His defence. From that tumultuous mass which gathers and swells around the tribunal of Pilate one dreadful cry arises, "Away with him, crucify him." Even the Roman judge, heathen as he was, trembles at the appalling demand, and again and again struggles to turn them from their deadly purpose, but they only cry out with greater fury, "Crucify him." And these are the same voices that within so short a time had shouted as He went in triumph, "Hosanna to the son of David."

At first sight this change may seem absolutely unaccountable. Whether it is so or not we shall judge directly. I shall only ask you to observe, first, that we have no reason to doubt the real sincerity of those manifestations of joy and honour with which the people had hailed our Lord's brief triumph. We are told expressly that they knew of the miracle by which He had restored Lazarus

to life, and that this was the immediate occasion of the demonstrations with which they met Him on His approach to Jerusalem. They believed, therefore, in His divine power. They believed Him to be the promised Messiah too, for they hailed Him as the Son of David, acknowledging in the very circumstances which attended His approach the fulfilment of the prediction that announced it. They owned Him as accomplishing one prophecy—that of Zechariah ; and they themselves applied to Him another—that of the hundred and eighteenth psalm. But further than this : from our Lord's answer to the Pharisees, " If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out," we may also infer a witness too against narrow views which limit divine grace to certain persons, both in its grant and its continuance ; that on this occasion these very persons were under a divine influence ; in other words, that the joy which they displayed was not only genuine and religious, but that it was connected with the gracious influence of God at that time operating on their minds,—an influence so powerful and diffused that our Lord says if they had been silent even inanimate nature would have broken out into speech. And finally, their sincerity was marked by others, and did not pass with the day. It had been already recognised

as an alarming fact by our Lord's enemies, who had discussed it in their council: "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him." And the reason which led the priests to seize Him at night and in private was the fear of a popular outbreak in His favour: "Not on the feast-day, they said, lest there be an uproar among the people."

Up to the time of His apprehension, then, we have every reason for believing that the people were not only sincere, but had continued constant in their belief and professions of attachment. All shows reality as far as they had gone. After His arrest the tide changed. They took the opposite side, and were arrayed against Him. And here, too, we need no proof of their having been in earnest. At the judgment-seat of the governor they clamoured for His death, with a dreadful and bloodthirsty sincerity that would take no denial. All the delays, struggles, and evasions of Pilate were unavailing. They showed their determination to gain their end at all risks, by claiming for themselves the entire responsibility of the sentence, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

Here then we come upon the very root of the sin which the Jews committed at this time. And

what was it? What was that habit and temper of mind through which they were led so easily to pass from receiving our Lord as their King, and to the crime of rejecting Him? Was it something very gross and shocking? was it the result of long habits of guilty indulgence, ending in a seared and insensible conscience? Nothing of the kind. One day the people honoured our Lord, the next they clamoured for His death. Why? Because they had no stability of character—that is all. They were fickle, light-minded, inconstant. Mark this well. Their belief in our Lord and all the joy that attended it was sudden—transitory though genuine; their rejection of Him was sudden too. It was not the result of forethought and deliberation; they had no time for it, and had not formed the habit of it. They acted on the impulse of the moment; crowds have no conscience. Had they used reflection, they might have acted differently; but they were not accustomed to reflection. At this time they gave way to the same levity of character which had been their habit at so many other times, only now with a different result; and we are warned by the abyss into which they fell.

Now let me ask you is this levity and fickleness of character, this want of a fixed and unflinching adherence to what is right, a common or

an uncommon fault? is it a gross sin, or what we should call an ordinary infirmity; something that we may pity, if indeed we go even so far, but that we should never think of condemning with severity or of regarding with fear as being deadly in its nature? Yet you see in the narrative of the Passion what it led to. It is true, indeed, that such an instance of its effects must be ever without parallel, and could occur but once; and therefore the whole aspect of it is gigantic and portentous. We may never have read or heard of so abrupt and violent a revulsion from love to hatred, from honour to insult, from songs of joy to shouts of execration. But what then? The whole time was full of wonders. God was upon earth. God had visited man. Man was given but once the opportunity of personally rejecting Him. His presence was a test of what is in human nature, and drew out into their full light, and enables us now to judge of the true character of those sins which lie within us, in the midst of which we are living, and which surround us as the very atmosphere we breathe. The act was different, not the temper and state of mind which produced the act. And what does this show us? Not that the men who rejected our Lord were worse than other men, but that the sins with which we are familiar are worse than we will

believe them to be. But you will say, perhaps, that levity of character, bad as it is, is not altogether unreasonable. Fickle and changeable people, if we could trace their actions to the source, have some grounds, at any rate, for what they do, although we may disapprove of them. Levity itself is not a motive. To act upon impulse implies some impulse to be acted upon. Now unless you can point out something of this kind in the present instance, the conduct of the Jews seems altogether exceptional, and ceases to be applicable in the way of warning. They passed at once from the extreme of worship to that of persecution. By what means was this total revolution brought about? what were the immediate motives to which they yielded?

To this I might reply by denying that fickleness itself is not sometimes a motive. Have you never heard of the extremes to which some are carried by caprice alone? Are not people sometimes changeable merely from the love of change, and without any other assignable motive? Do they not say that they require change? Do they not form and renounce, make and drop acquaintances? Do they not rush from the extreme of intimacy to that of distance and dislike for no other reason than because they are changeable? Are not tastes and fashions always changing? and is not

the love of variety for variety's sake one of the commonest traits in man's character? But not to insist on this, I will at once bring the case of the Jews more home by replying that they had motives for their change, and just the sort of motives which tell upon the fickle and inconsiderate character, as I shall now proceed to show you.

You must remember then that when the Jewish multitude met our Lord on the day of His public entry into Jerusalem with such an unequivocal acknowledgment that He was the Messiah, they held the belief—common to the entire nation—that the Messiah's kingdom would at once be set up in all the form and circumstance of an earthly monarchy, only transcending in power and magnificence any empire which the world had ever before witnessed. So the King coming to Sion meek and riding upon an ass seemed at length to fulfil the long traditionary aspiration of the chosen people. The hopes of centuries, the announcement of prophecy, seemed to be starting into living facts before their eyes, and in the palm-branches, the spread garments, and the exulting hosannas, they expressed the conviction that their earthly Deliverer was come; liberty from the yoke of Rome as Moses had brought their fathers out of Egypt, victory over their enemies as Joshua had conquered Canaan,

and a dominion of which that of Solomon was but a poor shadow were to be theirs from that day.

With such anticipations as these they attended our Lord into Jerusalem. They had heard of Him long before, but the fame of His miracles, and especially the raising of Lazarus wrought in the neighbourhood so lately, all was confirmed and explained by this first and public declaration of Himself as the King whom they were expecting. Well, the triumph of the day was over, and they separated, full, no doubt, of such thoughts as these. The next passed, and the next, and the next, and still there was no open assumption of power, except in the single instance of His expelling the buyers and sellers from the temple,—a vindication of God's house which would tell as much *against* their own prejudices as it would in favour of our Lord's claims. Now what would be the natural result with the fickle-minded of this delay in the fulfilment of their expectations? Plainly this: discontent and impatience. First, they would begin to murmur and complain among themselves at a delay and hesitation that seemed inexplicable. Next, when this continued, would come disappointment, bitter and exasperating in proportion to the pitch of enthusiasm to which they had been previously wound up.

But when our Lord's seizure followed; when

the incomprehensible fact broke upon them, blasting all their hopes, that He was in the hands of His enemies; when they actually beheld Him bound and helpless, arraigned before that very tribunal above which they had expected to see Him enthroned as king; then the reaction was complete, and they were again prepared to lend a ready ear to the suggestions of the priests, who now regained their influence over them, and of whom it is expressly said throughout the narrative that they stirred up the people.

But once more. You may ask, "Did they not then believe in our Lord's miraculous powers? Had they not witnessed the exercise of them? Was not the raising of Lazarus from the dead what actually drew them forth to meet Him on His approach to the city? And how is such belief reconcilable at all with so sudden and complete a change of conduct?" I reply by reminding you that it is the very characteristic of this sin of levity of which I am speaking, to lose sight of everything except the one object, impulse, or feeling of the moment, whatever that may be. Fickle and inconstant people are not assailed by doubts. They do not grasp anything with sufficient vigour to doubt it. They have no root in themselves, as our Lord said. They believe, and they do not believe. They have no fixed prin-

ciple of conduct, and cannot be depended upon at the critical moment when their reliability is brought to the test. And so it was with this Jewish multitude of whom I have been speaking. They did not doubt our Lord's miracles—far from it. If they had doubted they would have thought of them, and if they had thought of them they would have paused ; but they were not thinking of them. They were thinking only of their disappointment ; and by this they fell into that crime which has lain upon the nation to this very day.

And now to apply all this more closely to ourselves. Here surely is a very awful lesson for us all. The habit of mind that caused the sin of which the Jews were guilty involved nothing which we could regard as in itself monstrous or criminal—nothing exceptional or uncommon. It is, on the contrary, one of the most prevalent of all the dispositions to which our nature is subject —the common sin of man, with which every one is more or less infected,—levity, want of serious thought and principle. Let us consider this well and take it home to our own hearts. The majority of people in all ranks of life are not positively *wicked.* God forbid! They are not vicious, not immoral, not unbelievers. They have no settled, deliberate purpose of doing wrong. On the contrary, generally speaking, perhaps they

propose to do right. Their intention is good; but they fail. Why? Because they forget their resolutions in the moment of trial, at the very time when they should act on them. And why do they forget them? Because they are too light-minded; they are not sufficiently in earnest about them. This is the history of most falls. Alas! it is more or less the history of most of ourselves, and the best are not wholly exempt from a resemblance to the sad picture. But this is the history of the fall of the Jewish people. Remember that. They believed, and they rejected. One day they shouted, "Hosanna!" another they uttered the tremendous cry in the text, "Let him be crucified!" We too begin the day well. We offer ourselves to God in our prayers, and purpose to follow Him in all we do. We realise to ourselves the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death and judgment, the vanity of all below. But temptation or distraction comes through the day, and all vanishes from the mind as if it had never been believed; and why? Because we have no true constancy. That is what it really comes to. We are not in thorough-going earnest. If we were we should not change. And recollect that this sin of the Jews—this sin of our nature, this sin of our own hearts—common and unspeakably dangerous as we see that it is—is in a peculiar

sense the sin of our own age. The whole world about us is now restless and changing in a way without parallel for centuries. It is not only the vice—the sin; in one aspect it is the very boast of the day—progress, as it is called, which means change. Not holding fast and improving what we have, but changing it. We are so much better, so much wiser, so much cleverer than our forefathers that what was good enough for them cannot even be improved for us, but must be changed altogether. Revolution has struck at the root of modern life in all its forms—public, social, and private. Reverence to authority, obedience to law, respect for rank, station, age—all are becoming subverted. Everywhere the old landmarks are giving way, and new forms of opinion and of life springing up, the issue of which no human mind can forecast. And so in religion. Even within the pale of the baptized men deny Christ's Church, Christ's ministers, Christ's sacraments, Christ's doctrines, Christ's Scripture, and at length go on to deny the truth of His Divine Person. Formerly the world honoured Christianity; now the world is rejecting it step by step. Formerly Christians were true to their own faith; now Christians themselves are forsaking it, by an inward, secret, insidious defection, and that mainly from the spirit of change which is everywhere

active. In such a state of things our temptations are enormously increased, and we have deeper need to search our hearts earnestly, and to seek from God that fixedness of principle in adhering to His truth and His ways which may stand the test of present trial and final judgment.

And in one way we can apply the test to ourselves now. During this week we shall have dwelt upon the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, and that infinite love to all and each of us which was manifested upon the cross. It would be impossible for us at such a time not to be in some measure impressed—not to form some resolutions of amendment and of self-dedication to Him who has so loved us. Let us beware that these purposes are not lightly formed and lightly kept. Let us pray with the greater earnestness that our resolutions may be strong when we enter the world, and bear us through its temptations and snares. The proof of them will come soon enough. It will come every day. It will meet you in your outward duties and your inward thoughts—in everything you say and do; in your intercourse with others and when you are alone. The Jewish multitude who first rejoiced in our Lord, then rejected Him. Let us pray that our love, gratitude, and self-surrender at this time may be genuine, deep-rooted, and lasting.

And remember too that these words of the Jews have a true and permanent significance for all men. "His blood be on us, and on our children." This saying must be fulfilled in the person of each one of us here now. His blood *must* be on us either to save or to condemn. It is indeed the most awful of truths. Take it with you then and think well of it. That precious blood now applied to your conscience—applied in the highest of all forms, sacramentally—that blood will either purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God, or it will rise up in the judgment against you. Think of this, I beseech you; and as you think of it, pray that God may grant to you grace to live so that being washed here in the blood of the Lamb, you may be acknowledged by Him as His own when He cometh in His kingdom.

XVIII

THE RICH MAN'S MESSAGE TO HIS BRETHREN

"I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."—LUKE xvi. 27.

THE voice which we hear in this passage of Scripture is a voice from the other world, and the words it utters are reported to us by the mouth of Him who is the Truth Himself. Here is one speaking to us from beyond the grave, where he is and will be throughout eternity,—one who bears the same nature with ourselves, lived in this present world just as we are living, but has passed away from it finally. And now out of that eternal world where he is, he speaks to us, tells us of his condition, of what he thinks of his past life and of his present state, and warns us, if we are like him, of the brink of ruin on which we stand. The parable or story in which the words occur, sets before us two persons, their lives here

on earth, their deaths, and what befell them both after death. It discloses to us their state in that next world, as it is called, which is so close to every one of us, and into which they passed when they died.

These two persons are placed at the two opposite extremities of the social scale here ; they are a rich man and a beggar. It is a great, an immense division ; we cannot conceive a wider. One of these men has everything he wants ; he has more, he has everything he wishes for. He has no experience of the outward ills of life ; he does not know what hunger, thirst, cold, scanty clothing, want of shelter are. He can buy everything he needs, and, unless his notions are very extravagant, everything he has a fancy for. The other has nothing he could wish for if his wishes were ever so moderate ; he has not even what would supply his barest wants ; he is helpless from disease. But far apart as these two are in condition, they are near in place. The rich man is near the beggar ; the beggar is laid at the rich man's gate. The rich man sees him there suffering, in want, without shelter. The beggar sees the rich man within, surrounded by luxury ; dwelling in a fine house, adorned with costly furniture ; attended by many servants, clad in rich clothing, sitting down to a sumptuous table.

He sees all this going on day after day; and the rich man sees him in his wretchedness. Finally, the beggar desires to be fed with the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. This is the picture set before us,—a picture not uncommon in the world, not peculiar to ancient times or to Jerusalem, but one which may be witnessed in many streets of the very city in which we ourselves are now living.

This is the life of these two—neighbours, shall I call them?—monotonous enjoyment and monotonous suffering; and like everything else on earth, it comes to an end. The beggar dies first. He is released, as men call it, by a sort of delicate and commiserating refinement of speech. And the words are truer than they are commonly intended to be. He is released. God has taken and provided for him. It may truly be called a release. He was in a prison, a dark, mean, squalid dungeon, and angel-messengers have come and opened the doors, and set him free; the angels of God have met him and transported him to a blessed state. The rich man also dies, for his riches could not keep him alive; they have done all they could for him, but they cannot do this, and he has to leave them; he dies, and he is buried. Everything in this world is done in accordance with the claims and requirements of

his station. He is followed to the grave by the usual body of mourners, men of his own rank and habits who desire to pay a becoming tribute of respect to his memory, who behave with all the decorum suited to the occasion, and return to their several avocations with the common conventional remarks on the office in which they have been engaged. And then the world, having completely performed its part for the rich man, has no more to say to him, and leaves him for ever. He too, as well as the beggar, is now in the other world. How and where, let the words of Scripture declare. "And in hell"—or in Hades, if you please; the word makes no difference in the condition of the man—"he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Again the two persons are brought forward, and again with the opposite extremes of condition. But now all is reversed to the most utter and absolute degree. The beggar is provided for; he is rich; in Abraham's bosom, in the joys of Paradise whither the ministering angels have borne him; no more want or suffering for him, but light and rest and refreshment, to be followed by the glories of the resurrection. The rich man is with the lost; past repentance, past remedy, past change, past hope. He is the beggar now in that most appalling

sense which belongs to those who are destitute for eternity. And again these two recognise each other. The rich man knows the beggar now, and asks that Lazarus may help him. See the awful strictness of the parallel. Here on earth Lazarus lay at his gate; there he lies in sight of the blessedness of Lazarus. The beggar had desired to be fed with the *crumbs* that fell from his table; he desires that Lazarus may be sent to him with a *drop* of water. And when he is told that this cannot be, because, though they are in sight of each other, they are still and for ever separated by an impassable boundary, he adds a further request, and prays, in the words I have taken as a text: "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

This is the voice from the other world of which I spoke just now. It is the most solemn, the most awful voice that any of us has ever yet heard. Christ has here raised up for us a preacher to whom indeed we should do well to listen with every faculty of our minds aroused and attentive. This preacher who speaks thus out of that unseen eternity was once what we are now, enjoyed opportunities like our own, listened to

some of those truths which we have heard so often, and is now experiencing all the woful consequences of having neglected them. If you don't listen to me listen to this man, for we have never heard words more fitted to impress us, because they are the words of one who speaks of what he knows, not by hearsay, nor vision, nor revelation, but by actual, dreadful, and personal proof. Here is a soul in the other world crying out and telling us what he thinks of his own condition—a soul that lived upon earth, perhaps, as one of you may be living at this very hour, telling you what he thinks of that past life; what the consequence has been to him, what it will be to you; what he would advise you to do, if you would escape his fate. It is not the cry of repentance, for in that world there is no place for repentance—here and now is the place and time; but it is the cry of warning, the more intensely awful because it is uttered by the impenitent. He had first asked for some mitigation of his own sufferings, and when he finds that this cannot be obtained, he goes on to a further petition, and prays that Lazarus may be sent to his father's house to bear testimony to his brethren, and persuade them to repentance.

This then is what he wants; this is his cry. And now let me in what follows try to interpret

it for you. The prayer, indeed, was not granted; on the contrary, it was silenced by those solemn words: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." But let us look at this occasion in another aspect, and following out the request itself, let us try to realise to our own minds what testimony this lost soul would have desired Lazarus to bear to those whom he had left on earth. Let us endeavour to conceive and bring home to ourselves what the purport of his message would have been; what this soul, speaking out of eternity, would desire to say to those on earth; what would have been the message of the rich man to his brethren.

1. Suppose then that Lazarus had been permitted to return once more to earth, the bearer of this man's message—what, do you think, would be the subject of that awful communication; what would he charge him above all things to make known to his brethren? Surely first and before everything else he would conjure him to impress upon them the tremendous *reality* of that existence in which he now found himself. Would he not say, "Tell my brethren that everything they have ever been taught from the Scriptures about this life in which I now am, and into which they too must so soon pass, is true, and that the truth

reaches far beyond all that they have been told; and if they would escape ruin for ever, and win life, they must believe and act upon the truth without a moment's delay. Tell them where I am, tell them what I am, and do not hide from them anything that you can tell, or shrink from the discovery because of the greatness of its terrors. Tell them all that you can interpret into human language and make intelligible to man's thoughts, or that they are capable of receiving in their present state, no matter what effect it may have upon them to hear you. When I was upon earth myself, a living man, in that past life beyond repentance or recall, I heard of all this myself as they do; I was taught and knew it, but I did not think about it, and it seemed to me altogether distant and unreal. I saw that other visible world in which I was living about me on all sides, full of life and light, as it then seemed to be, full of people, their works, employments, and interests. It was with me all the day long—the last thing at night, the first in the morning; and I never thought of withdrawing myself from it, or felt as if I should leave it. I was rich, with no need to labour or exert myself, without wants or cares; it was natural to me to indulge my own wishes; I had good health, I was courted by society, I had many acquaintances to encourage and flatter

me ; the road was broad and easy, and so I lived on from day to day as if my days were never to come to an end. I saw you, Lazarus, laid at my gate, but it was with the same feeling with which I would have seen a blot upon some fair picture, disfiguring it ; it was unintelligible to me, and I turned away from the sight as I would from anything else that was disagreeable, and shut out the recollection with it. Sometimes the thought of death would come into my mind with the desolate feeling at the heart that I must one day leave all those bright and pleasant things. Sometimes in the darkness of night the dread sense of my Creator would fall upon me like a shadow, and at such seasons as these I would form good resolutions for the future and determine to adopt a more serious way of life, but the impression would pass when daylight came, and be wholly blotted out by the society of the world. I did not truly think that there was any reality at all, except in the world in which I was then living ; it had full, entire, and exclusive possession of me. I did not really believe in my Creator, or that I was His creature, and that everything I owned was given me by Him, and must be strictly accounted for. I did not believe in the future life, which is now for ever present. I knew I must die—that was all ; and I did not like to think about dying.

But, above all things, I did not believe in hell. I said that God was too merciful—wretched fool that I was, who abused God's mercy, and did not believe it for good, to persuade myself of it to my own destruction!—too merciful to punish a man for ever for the sins of his mortal life; and even mocked at and made light of it, using the word—the dreadful word—hell in common talk and jest. Tell them, I say, that this is the sort of life I led, for my brethren are leading the same. They shared my enjoyments; they saw my example; they are treading in my footsteps; they are going on, and they will come to this place if they are not stopped. I charge you, therefore, when you go to my father's house, to awaken them at all costs out of this mortal lethargy in which they are plunged. I charge you by all the worth of a soul, which we both know, by all the value of that blessedness which you experience, and which I have forfeited for ever—I charge you to put all this before them in words which will burn up and consume all doubt, which will penetrate into their inmost souls and strike them with lasting awe; to give them no rest till you have made them believe that which, if I had only believed it in time, would have saved me from coming to this place of woe. Tell them, O tell them, as one that knows it, something of what a soul is, and of what

eternity is. Tell them everything that may be uttered of this endless prison where you see me lie; of this punishment to which I am for ever condemned; of these companions that are about me; of that great gulf which I can never pass. Tell them what reality is, of which they know nothing in the life they are now dreaming away their days in, lest they come to this place of torment"?

2. And do you not think that such a soul, thus permitted to preach to those he had left on earth, would add this also, and implore the messenger to convince them by every possible proof of the relative value of this earthly life with all its concerns, and the life to come with whatever belongs to it. Would he not add, "Tell them, demonstrate to them, for they do not believe it, that the world in which they are now living, that appears so imposing and attractive, the property they possess, the business or pleasures that engage them, the objects and interests with which their minds are filled, the men that surround them, of whose opinions they think so much, whose ways they follow, whose censure or ridicule they dread, whom they are afraid to oppose in anything of importance,—tell them that all this, the sky above them, the earth they tread on that seems so firm and durable, the whole circle and system in which

they are living, is an empty show, a dream, a vapour, a mere breath, without substance, solidity, or permanence ; that language could not paint its emptiness ; that it is nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison with the world to which you belong. Tell them that all these things come to a speedy end ; that the longest time on earth is short ; that even a sick or dying man can say as much as this—that the world is of no value ; but it is only the soul which has left it for this eternal state, the soul which has the experience, that can form any notion of its incomparable insignificance. Tell them that I myself, whom they knew, am witness, and though I cannot return and unveil to them the awful certainties in my own person, I adjure them by you to be warned and to receive my testimony. Say that I know well what is the worth of their world, because I was once full of it and ruled by it, like themselves and others ; but I have tried both worlds, and can compare them together ; and I now cry out to them from this hopeless prison to which I am condemned, that all my past life on earth was only one huge mistake, the issue and end of which has been total ruin"?

3. But there is one subject above all others on which we may well suppose that the rich man would desire to have his brethren most clearly

enlightened, and that is, the dread secret of his own failure; what were those sins and offences, what were those deeds done in the flesh, what was the true and essential character of that earthly life of his which had brought upon him such tremendous retribution; what it was in his past conduct that formed the true and proper ground of his condemnation. Surely this would be the point of most vital importance to inform them upon. Would he not say then, "Warn them that I have not perished because I was a great and notorious sinner, because I was guilty of any flagrant impieties against God, or any acts of violence or injustice to man. Do not let them make such a mistake as this. Do not let them delude themselves by saying that they are not guilty of great crimes, that they are no worse than others, that they are living like thousands about them, and that they do not believe there can be mortal danger in doing what most of those they are acquainted with do also. When I was living on earth, I was no murderer or adulterer, or thief, or liar, or drunkard, or blasphemer, or infidel. I was none of these. Men did not shrink from me in fear or loathing when they met me, as from a monster of iniquity or one whom God would cast off for ever. On the contrary, they looked upon me with respect, and envied my prosperity as poor

human beings envy the rich. 'There is a man,' they said, 'who has a fine fortune, and spends it freely. He lives in the best style, keeps a hospitable table, a pleasant house, where you are always sure of meeting agreeable companions.' This is what the world thought of me and what I thought of myself. And what was my crime? He that hath ears to hear let him hear. The Bible says, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all they that forget God.' This was my crime. I forgot God. I took everything from Him—food, clothing, house, money, property, health, enjoyment—all. I took everything from Him, everything I could get, and forgot Him. I got all I could get from God and I forgot the Giver. I forgot Him in the morning when He renewed my life, I forgot Him in the day, I forgot Him at my feasts, I forgot Him when I lay down helpless at night. I forgot all my duties to Him. I did nothing for Him in return for everything which He did for me. He put Lazarus at my gate to teach me, and I shut my eyes. Practically I lived like a brute, feeding and browsing upon the earth, and never heartily looking up to the Creator of heaven and earth. This was my monstrous crime; I repeat it—forgetting God. He is a jealous God, and I provoked Him every day. Life and death were set before me—the life of serving God, the

death of forgetting Him; and I did not choose life, and not to choose life is to choose death. I was called to serve God or Mammon, and I chose to serve Mammon. I perished not by vice or wickedness, but by carelessness and love of the world." (Hear this, ye careless ones in this church.) "Tell them this: tell them the greatest danger is not to think of danger; the most desperate insecurity is to feel secure; the thing most to be afraid of is to have no fear. Tell them that theirs is the time to change—now; they cannot repent when they die. I cannot repent. If repentance were possible, it would bridge this abyss and extinguish these flames. But I cannot do it. In all this horror I cannot mourn for a single sin. I could have done so once; I cannot now. I can only shudder at suffering. Tell them to repent at once then before it is hopeless. And then, when you awaken them—when you make them tremble—tell them, for this I cannot do, what it is to have the soul saved. Tell them what salvation is, and who is the sole Saviour. Tell them who you are, for they will not know you in your transfiguration. They will wonder at the immortal brightness of your aspect and the sweetness of Paradise that breathes about you. Say that you are the very Lazarus they once knew. Tell them what you are and where you are now,

and all that your Maker and Saviour has done for you. Describe what I cannot even imagine, and then beg and implore of them not to spurn all and sell eternity for the moments of mortal life"?

This is something of that message which a soul in eternity might send, if it were permitted, to those whom they had left here on earth. Something of it, for who could conceive and grasp the whole, or picture the view which such a soul must take of the past and of the present? And now I will add but one word in application of the whole. Learn then, first, the mortal danger of a sinful life, if such is yours—see how it ends; next of a worldly life, in all its shapes and forms —reputable or disreputable, busy or idle, careless or diligent, self-indulgent or laborious, no matter what if it keeps you from God; and next and last, the *danger*, the present momentary extremity of *not* living for eternity, *not* laying up treasures in heaven, *not* serving God through Christ, and making it the aim and end of your being to belong to Him now and for ever.

XIX

EASTER

"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROM. vi. 11.

THIS is the Church's Easter exhortation to us; this is the lesson she teaches us to-day. Taking the words of St. Paul in the sixth of Romans for the second lesson this morning, she says to us one and all: "Christ has died upon the cross for your sins. He has borne your sins; borne that weight which even in this world has brought down many a man to his grave, and which, if you had to bear it yourself in the next world, would be heavy enough to crush you into perdition. He has done all this; He has died unto sin once; what then? Reckon yourself therefore to be dead to sin. But He has risen again from the dead; conquered death, and brought life and immortality to light. Therefore reckon yourself now to be alive to God; dead to sin through Him, and alive to God through Him also."

This exhortation is addressed to all. St. Paul is not speaking to any special and privileged class among the Romans. It is not merely to those who were walking worthy of their calling, and letting their light shine before men, that he says this, but to every one of them—good and bad, godly and ungodly, consistent and inconsistent; he makes no distinction. And so it is now. These same words belong to us. The call is the same: Christ has died, and Christ has risen. We celebrate to-day His glorious resurrection. Therefore reckon yourselves now, every one of you, to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now there is one peculiarity in these words that must, I think, strike us at once when we begin to consider them. St. Paul desires us to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. Observe the word—*reckon*. He does not bid us look forward to this state of death to sin and life to God as a condition only to be aimed at; he does not say, "Try to make it your study to become dead to sin and alive to God; let it be your object to look forward to it." This would be easily understood, but he does not say this. He speaks of it as our present actual condition—a condition we are to hold fast to and maintain as now our own. "Reckon yourselves,"

he says,—count and look upon yourselves at this very time,—to be dead to sin and alive to God. Take this one uniform view of yourself and of your own entire state here, in this present world where you are, and at this present time. Let it be your daily, habitual, abiding estimate of your own nature, character, and condition, of what you are in yourself, and in your relations to everything and every person about you. Regard yourself as being dead to sin at all times; in all its forms; in every aspect in which it presents itself; and as one who is alive to God in all your aims and pursuits—in every duty, detail, and circumstance of life. And to the very same effect he speaks also in the Scripture chosen for to-day's epistle. "Ye are dead," he says there; not, ye must seek, and may hope to die to sin and to the world, but, ye have died already, and are now, at this time, dead; it is your actual state; and now also alive, for your life is hid with Christ in God.

Such is the import which the words of the text bear upon the face of them, and so the first thing they teach us is a great and all-important fact about ourselves—about our own true condition, powers, and work. When the apostle bids us reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God, of course he is telling us to reckon ourselves

to be what we really are—not something different from what we are. It is not that we are to suppose or imagine ourselves to be dead to sin in some figurative or fictitious sense, but that being so, we are to recognise the truth, and make it a conviction. If we are not dead to sin and alive to God, there would be absolutely no meaning at all in this precept, and no possible effect from it. You could not, for instance, say to a blind man, "Reckon yourself to be one possessed of sight;" or to a paralysed man, "Reckon yourself to have the use of your limbs;" or to a poor man, "Reckon yourself to be rich;" or to an ignorant man, "Reckon yourself to be learned." A man must possess sight before he can consider himself as able to see, and he must have the use of his limbs in order to count on being able to move, and he must have wealth or knowledge if he is to reckon on using either. It would not only be ineffectual and senseless, but a cruel mockery to call upon any one to exercise gifts or powers which they did not possess, or were incapable of exercising. The very fact of the call, therefore, presupposes the existence of the power, even in ordinary cases; but how much more when the call, as in the present instance, comes from God Himself, the Giver of the power also! And therefore when we are commanded, as we are in the text, to reckon

ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God, the command implies in itself that we are already in that condition. This then is what we *are*—you and I and every one in this church. Whatever may be your past or present life, your character, circumstances, disposition, trials, temptations, sins, none of them touch this great fact common to us all—the great fact that runs up to the resurrection of Christ, and stands firmly upon it as an immovable foundation—ye are dead and alive: "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But let us ask—How have we been brought into this state? in what way did we ever become dead? Certainly not by nature. The child that is born into this world is born alive to the world and to everything it contains, and with all the possibilities of future evil folded within the nature it bears, and waiting but the occasions and opportunities of development. We are the children of Adam, born in sin, and inheriting the nature of our progenitor. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and cannot change itself or make itself anything else—anything better or higher than flesh, with all its appetites and propensities. A man cannot raise himself above himself—that is, above his nature; but God can raise him. It is

not that we merely follow the example of Adam in our own persons, and so become sinners by committing actual sin. Children do not always follow the example of their parents, whether for good or evil, as we see every day. Sometimes they are better than their parents, and sometimes they are worse; but they all share the nature of their parents, and to that nature belongs not a liability, but a proneness to sin, and this is common to every one alike who shares it. We sin, not because we have a bad example, but because we have a fallen nature. How then, and when, did we become dead to sin? St. Paul answers the question in the beginning of this chapter. "Know ye not," he says (verse 3),—as much as to say, ye know very well,—"that so many of us"—that is, all of us—"who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we were"—the words all refer to the past—"we were buried with him by baptism into death,"—we were each personally united to Christ, and made partakers of the power of His death,—"that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,"—that is, we were also made partakers of Christ's resurrection, raised from the dead with Him, and endued with the powers of a risen life. Baptism is no mere out-

ward or symbolical transaction. It is Christ's sacrament, and as His sacrament it is an ordinance of life and power. Christ is the baptizer. By birth we are united to Adam, and inherit his nature ; by baptism, or new birth, we are united to Christ, and receive the gift of a new nature. The two relations strictly correspond, and the one is as certain as the other. We came into the world with a sinful nature, not by any act or choice of our own. This is the mystery of our birth ; and all that we or any one knows or can discover about it is what God has told us : Adam sinned, and we are his offspring, and derive sin from him. But Christ has come to save us. He has Himself become the Head of a new creation. He has taken upon Him our nature, restored it in His own Person, died for us, risen again, and now communicates to us of His risen life. Baptism is a second birth, in which we are actually joined to Christ and share His nature, as we are already joined to Adam and share his. We are baptized into Christ, we die, are buried, and rise again with Him ; and because we do—because a real death and resurrection in grace and power have already taken place in us—the apostle is able to say to us all : " Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And now, looking at this one aspect—and it is only one—of our Lord's resurrection, of what that resurrection has done for us, and the state into which it has brought us now, have we not every one of us infinite reason to rejoice and thank God for the great event we celebrate to-day? Look at it only in this way. We bear a sinful nature, and sin brings with it, even in this life, nothing certain but sorrow and suffering; and this sin, this dreadful moral plague, which infects not merely the body but the soul, and so acquires an endless vitality, is ours. We carry it within us—each from his birth; we cannot get rid of it ourselves, nor can any creature deliver us from it. But we have been baptized into Christ, and so we have died to sin, and risen again with Him. The power of His resurrection has already acted upon us, and given life to our souls. We have not merely this helpless, defiled, corrupted nature to carry about with us for ever; that sinful nature has died, and we have received a renewed, a new nature from our risen Lord. He has taken us, sinful creatures of the dust, and has actually united us to Himself. He—God—has taken our nature first into union in His Person, with Deity, so that He is both God and man; the eternal Son, one with the eternal Father, and the Son of man, one with us men on earth. He has done

this, but He has done even more than this: in baptism He has taken each of us singly, one by one, and joined us to His own human nature, and through that human nature to His divinity; not only raising all humanity and every sharer of it by His personal union with manhood, but raising each baptized soul individually and separately by uniting it to Himself. This is the great, the stupendous gift which He has given to us all. Like everything truly great, all great honour, great power, great privilege, great blessing, the very thought of it is awful in its glory. We can only repeat the fact, for no words could ever do justice to it, and no thought could embrace its fulness: we creatures have been united in our own persons to Him who is God; we sinners to the all-holy and all-pure humanity of Christ. Have we not then reason to rejoice to-day? Have we not reason every one of us to say with the Psalmist: "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities; who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness"—to say with the Apostle Paul: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—this sinful nature with which I was born,—"I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But now that I have spoken of what Christ has done, we must come to our own part as it is taught in the text. What is it that we are to do, for whom He has done all this? "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." We have here summed up in one sentence the whole rule of the Christian life, and if we had all observed it from our childhood what different creatures should we be now! As the same gift has been bestowed upon all, so the same command is addressed to all, without any difference—to every Christian alike. The greatest saint is not called to anything higher than this, and the greatest sinner is not called to any less,—"Dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ."

First, "Dead to sin." To be dead to an object is to be as incapable of being touched, influenced, or affected by it as if we were really dead. Thus some people are dead to the pleasures of the world—that is, earthly pleasures have no attraction for them; or they are dead to ambition—that is, the honours and dignities of the world are to their minds nothing better than children's toys. And in this way, too, men are often dead to what is good—to truth, to justice, to honour, to duty; they are as insensible to their claims as a dead man would be. And so it is

with regard to sin. To be dead to sin is to be insensible to all its temptations; it is to be in that state in which the motions of sin within and the allurements to sin without have no power; it is to be dead to all sinful appetites, passions, desires, thoughts; dead to all sinful objects and aims—in a word, it is to have ceased from sin, as one who is dead has ceased from all living acts. This then is the power of Christ's death, and this is the power that was given us in baptism. I say the power, for it is to be wrought out by us separately in our individual lives.

But "reckon yourselves alive to God." To be alive to any object is to carry about with us an abiding consciousness of that object, whatever it may be. The man who is alive to his own interests never requires to be reminded of them. If he is not always actually thinking about them, he never really forgets them. They operate upon him instinctively in all his calculations, and in whatever he does. He who is alive to his duties lives under the sense of duty, as we say; it is a *sense*—that is, a permanent feeling—whether it be adverted to at the moment or not. But to be alive to God—what is this? It is to be alive indeed. It is to be alive in all our being to Him who touches us at every point of our being, within and without; alive to Him who is the source of

life ; in whom alone is life ; in whose presence is life, and the blessedness of all life. To be alive to God is to live in God's presence consciously, and to do as God wills freely. This is the other power given in baptism.

This then is what is meant by being dead to sin and alive to God : dead at all times to the power of sin, and alive at all times to the presence of God. And this is what St. Paul bids us to-day to *reckon* ourselves to be—every one of us. Some here are trying to lead good and holy lives ; some are leading worldly or careless ; some, I fear, are living in actual sin, secret or open ; but, as I said, the apostle makes no distinction, but speaks in these words to all. And perhaps you can see how any one who is really trying to lead a religious life can reckon himself to be dead to sin and alive to God ; but you may ask, How is it possible for those to do so who are not making the effort at all—who are consciously neglecting their souls, consciously living without God, disobeying His will, and breaking His law ?

Now I will ask you to attend to the answer to this question, for the point is of great importance. We may be sure that St. Paul, even as man, was wiser in these things than we are ; and I believe that we have in these words a great remedy applicable to the condition of each one among us,

whatever it may be, if we will only try to act upon it. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Why is it that any of us here do not get the better of our sins? Why do the best of us make so little progress in practical obedience? Why are others living in a constant succession of failures, so that they seem never to improve? Why are others living to the present world, or living in sin? There is one cause of this common to every case alike—*want of faith.* We do not advance because we want faith; we lead careless, ungodly, sinful lives, because we want faith. We do not believe in Christ's work. We languidly believe in what He once did *for* us; that He died for our sins upon the cross, and rose again; and we believe in what He is ready and willing to do for us—that He is ready to help us now if we seek Him; but we do not believe in what He has done *in* us—in that great and real work which He did once actually accomplish upon our individual nature, and of which to-day reminds us; we do not believe that we are now, or ever were, truly dead to sin; we have not faith in this great fact; and this is what St. Paul bids us believe—believe now, and believe at all times. This is the rule and remedy he proposes to us all—faith in what Christ has wrought

upon us already. Reckon yourself from this great day to be dead to sin and alive to God. Pray to God to increase your faith, and let it be your aim to take this view of yourself always and everywhere. Clothe yourself with this thought when you rise in the morning. Carry it about with you throughout the day. Recur to it within yourself; amid temptation, amid distractions, in company, when you are alone. Say to yourself, "I am dead to sin; how can I live any longer therein? I am alive to God; how can I live to any lower object?" Have faith. This is what God looks for in you, and the most acceptable offering you can render Him. Do not shrink from the greatness of His gifts. He delights to give. He has given you a great and wonderful gift—the gift of a new nature. Only exercise it; only believe that you once for all are dead to sin and alive to God, and act on the belief in everything. Do not pause to reason, or say, "I shall never be able to get the better of my sins; my sins have taken such hold upon me that I cannot look up." When Christ bid the paralytic man rise and walk, he did not stop to reason; he did not say, "How could he walk when he could not even move!" He believed. Follow his example, believe that you are dead to sin and alive to God, and act as one who is so. But do it through

Jesus Christ our Lord, in His name and by His strength. In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk. It was with Him you died; in His grave your sins were laid; by His resurrection you were made alive to God. Will you go now to His grave and take the dead sins out of that grave and make them live, and your living and risen self die? It is the power of His death and the power of His resurrection that you are to carry about with you always and everywhere. His very name, Jesus, is a tower of strength. Bear it with you. Cling to it for support, and it will not fail you. Remind yourself again and again that He has not only died for you, but that you have died with Him and risen; that you possess the powers of this new and noble life, and that what He bids you do is to believe and use them.

XX

JUSTIFICATION

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."—ROM. iv. 25.

THE *arrangement* of the services for Sundays and Holy-days supplies us with one distinct and valuable help towards ascertaining our Church's interpretation of Holy Scripture. The proper lessons, —I refer to the old lectionary,—the epistles, and gospels are chosen not only with reference to the seasons, but often also with special reference one to the other; and a careful examination of the several passages of Scripture which are thus brought into mutual bearing will often show that there is an intimate relation between them, and lead the inquirer to views of the import of Scripture, of which those who regard the services as so many detached passages of the Bible must remain in ignorance.

An instance of this design to render various parts of Scripture illustrative of one another, and to

convey important doctrinal teaching by means of their arrangement, is to be found in the selection and structure of the services for to-day, to which I propose to draw attention in this sermon. I hope to show you that the passage of Scripture which I have taken as my text, and which is embodied in the collect for the day, as well as the epistle, the gospel, and the proper lessons, one for the morning and the other for the evening, are closely connected, and that independently of the instruction which each passage, viewed by itself, contains, they convey, when taken together, a complete and consistent body of teaching upon one entire branch of religious doctrine.

1. The text, which, in reference to the season, is introduced into the collect, declares two great facts respecting our Lord. First, "He was delivered for our offences"—that is, as the collect explains, the Father gave His only Son to die for our sins, "and not for ours only," as St. John more fully expresses it,—meeting a deadly error as to the extent to which the sacrifice of Christ prevails,—"but also for the sins of the whole world." This clause then teaches the awful doctrine of our Lord's atonement, exhibited in such a variety of forms throughout the entire Scripture, and which we have been especially contemplating during the season which has just ended—that

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; delivered Him up for us all; that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; that, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, He has made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

The text adds, secondly, "He was raised for our justification." The word justify is used in a twofold sense in Scripture—that of accepting, and that of making acceptable; or rather, it combines in itself both senses, giving occasional prominence to one or other. Thus it sometimes refers chiefly to God's forgiveness, and sometimes to the conveyance of those gifts of His grace which inseparably accompany pardon. And this circumstance, that the gifts of grace always accompany God's pardon, will explain why the same term which expresses the outward act of forgiveness should also express the internal gift, which is the perfecting, or rather the essential reality, of the act itself. For the work of God—as His work, and viewed in itself—is perfect. When He forgives, He gives. His pardon is the uplifting of the fallen man, the restoration of the creature pardoned. It is the going forth of the eternal love and the eternal light upon the soul,

and it is therefore necessarily a change within the soul so penetrated. The analogy of man's pardon cannot in this instance be pressed without the risk of serious error. Man's forgiveness is an outward act, and can be nothing more. God's forgiveness cannot be merely outward. Man may desire or assume that the object of his forgiveness may be qualified to receive it. The parent may look with mingled anxiety and hope upon the erring child whom he pardons, but he cannot bestow even one of those dispositions which are at once the condition and the end of pardon. But for the love which created and redeemed to forgive—what else is it but for the love which sanctifies to draw the creature to itself, to bestow both the gift and that state of the soul which qualifies for the possession of the gift. In justification then we may distinguish but cannot separate the twofold act or element of which it is composed—what is inward, and what is outward ; pardon and the gift of grace. They are the same thing, only viewed under different aspects. And therefore when the word justify seems to be used in the narrower sense, we are not to understand that it excludes the wider one, or when it is used in the wider sense that it excludes the narrower ; that when it appears to refer chiefly to pardon, it does not also comprehend the

gift of grace; or when it refers to the gift of grace, it does not likewise include pardon.

In the clause which we are now considering, the latter sense is that which the apostle appears to have had immediately in view when he says that our Lord was raised again for our justification; for this reason. The death of Christ is especially that act by which the forgiveness of sins was purchased for us. But as St. Paul had just said in the preceding clause that He was delivered—that is, to death—for our offences; if, in adding that He was raised again for our justification, he had intended to convey that He was raised for the pardon of our offences, this would be to attribute precisely the same effect to our Lord's death and to His resurrection; and moreover we should have in the same sentence two different acts of our Lord represented as producing identically the same result, and that result described in two entirely different forms of expression. The justification, therefore, which He was raised to bestow must obviously be something different from or more than the pardon which He died to procure. And so, in fact, we find that while in Scripture our Lord's death is constantly connected with the forgiveness of sins, His resurrection is equally associated with the gift of grace and the power of a new life imparted

from His risen and glorified humanity. We are to understand the text then as teaching this—that our Lord died to atone for our sins and procure their pardon, and that He rose to complete our restoration to the favour of God by the gift and development of a new nature within us.

2. This text then sets before us in few words the substance of the work of our divine Lord in and for man. And now comes the question, to which we have an answer in the Scriptures for the day—How is that work applied to us? He died for our sins—how are we made partakers of His death? He was raised again for our justification—how is that new life conveyed to us?

To this question some reply by saying that God has not appointed any outward means whatsoever for conveying to us these most precious gifts, but has left it to each man to take and apply them for himself and to himself by voluntary and internal acts of his own. They deny, in principle, any intermediate agency between the soul and God—though by a fortunate inconsistency they practically recognise at least one—and assert that faith alone, the faith of each individual man,—that is, of course, the man himself employing this faculty,—takes, receives, and appropriates all the blessings of redemption. They say, not that faith is necessary, which is true, but that faith alone is

necessary to enable us to communicate with God. In such a system everything external is non-essential, and from being non-essential is, naturally enough, regarded as useless and burdensome; and when carried to its logical consequences, as it has been by some, it denies Church, sacraments, clergy, and finally Creed and Scripture, and resolves all religion into individual faith—that is, when so reduced and isolated, each man's own opinion.

Let us now turn to the very different answer which the choice of Scripture for to-day's services gives to the same question—How are we made partakers of Christ? what means has He appointed for conveying to us the benefits of His death, the grace of His resurrection?

In the last words of the epistle we are told that God hath given to us eternal life, that this life is in His Son, and that he that hath the Son hath life. Life is in Christ as its fountain and source, and life from Him substantially comprises all gifts. But how is this life conveyed to men? The question throws us back upon the opening words of the epistle, verse 4, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Life begins in birth, and so that life which is in Christ is first communicated to those who are born of God, while its reality is proved by its fruit—not at first indeed, but as it grows on to perfection—

resulting as it does in the conquest of the world and of sin. But how are men born of God? Now the same St. John who employs these words in the epistle, learned them, as we find in his gospel, from our Lord Himself, who there declares, in His discourse with Nicodemus, the necessity of being born again—"born of water and of the Spirit,"—words which from the first have been understood to apply to baptism, and are so applied in the baptismal service. He then that is born of water and of the Spirit in baptism is born of God, and he that is born of God is thereby made partaker of the life that is in Christ. The two sacraments are fully brought out in the sequel of the epistle. "This is he," continues St. John (verse 6), "that came by water and blood . . . not by water only, but by water and blood." And how was this? First, by water at His own baptism, fulfilling all righteousness, and sanctifying water once for all to the mystical washing away of sin; by blood at His circumcision; and above all when He poured out His own blood on the cross, and finished His work of suffering for man. Again, by water and blood, when out of His pierced side there came forth blood and water, mystically signifying the formation from Him, by the sacraments of water and blood, of His spouse the Church, as Eve was formed from

the opened side of Adam. Again, by water and blood, when He instituted the sacrament of baptism, commanding His disciples to baptize all nations; and when, at the Last Supper, He ordained the sacrament of His body and blood to be the spiritual food and sustenance of His Church until His coming again—the water more particularly signifying the removal of past guilt, yet conveying at the same time the gift of a second birth; the blood the very token of present life, yet bringing with it also the assurance of God's pardoning favour and goodness, and both made effectual by the Spirit; for there are three that bear witness in earth—the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one, the outward elements having no worth or power but by the Spirit working through them, and the Spirit employing these outward signs as tokens and pledges of His invisible operation. Here then the Church gives us a complete and explicit answer to the question suggested by the facts embodied in the collect, namely, How are the merits of Christ applied to men individually? By appointing for the epistle of the day this passage from St. John, in which the two sacraments are set before us both in their outward form and their inward power, we are plainly taught that it is by them, as His ordained channels, that God

conveys to man—he of course possessing the inward qualification—the gifts of redemption, and unites him to Christ, the source of life. And this teaching becomes the more emphatic when we find it thus embodied, as I said, in the very framework of our services.

3. But another question now arises. If God has appointed sacraments as the means by which we are made partakers of His grace, and of union with our Lord, it is of the last importance for us to know where these sacraments are to be had. We know, of course, that the outward sign is of itself nothing; the creature possesses no intrinsic life or efficacy; the element is empty and worthless apart from His word and appointment. It is the divine institution which clothes it with life and power, and renders it available to uses above nature. All the waters of the ocean could not wash away sin; but when Christ blesses these material objects they become at once the signs of His presence, and instruments by which He invisibly works in us, and unites us to Himself. Abana and Pharpar might be to human eyes better than all the waters of Israel, yet we know that at His word the despised Jordan could accomplish what was denied to the rivers of the proud Damascus. These two points must be distinctly realised in approaching the answer which

the Church gives to this question—first, the utter inefficacy in itself; and secondly, the certainty of its operation when once it becomes the instrument ordained by Christ. As to the former of these points, there is nothing more freely admitted among ourselves in the present day. All readily disclaim and repudiate any sort of reliance upon what is external; nay, so fully persuaded are we that the creature is utterly empty and helpless, that, on the strength of the conviction, we have gone into the opposite extreme, and the difficulty is now to convince and bring home to us as a reality that it *can* be used by Christ at all as the channel or instrument of a divine gift. This, which is the other point, is what becomes of such importance to us to grasp fully and clearly; and why, it may well be asked, should it be doubted? What can be more unreasonable than to suppose that all these material objects which surround us have no share in the great redemption that was wrought among them, and of which they were witnesses? or that, while the kingdom of God is set up in this world, the works of God are excluded from it, and no office or place found for them within its precincts? What can be more opposed to the entire tone of Scripture, which throughout calls upon the sun, moon, and stars, the earth and the ocean, mountain and

forest, field and river, cattle and feathered fowls, all things animate and inanimate, to rejoice at the coming of God? and which tells us how, when He came, He raised all these objects into the materials of His instruction and the instruments of His mercy; which discovers Him to us opening the great volume of nature and expounding its contents as the very symbols and representatives of spiritual truth; teaching by parables —those parables taken from the most familiar objects before men's eyes and imparting to them a new and sacred significance; which shows Him to us blessing the earth by dwelling upon it; blessing the air by breathing it; blessing the water by being baptized in it; blessing the fruit of the ground by tasting of it? In saying this I am not, of course, adducing any proof of the efficacy of the sacramental signs, which rests upon the words of Scripture. I am merely reminding you how entirely the doctrine of their efficacy falls in with the whole character of our Lord's life and teaching; how natural it seems to one who reads the gospels that He who blessed nature by His presence, used it as the language of His teaching, and the channel of so many acts of mercy, should on His departure hence leave in it a blessing that would raise it to even a nobler use; and how opposed, not only to the words of

Scripture, but to the spirit which pervades it, is that prejudice against sacramental doctrine of which I am now speaking.

But to return to the question. Outward ordinances require an outward ministry. The ministry is a necessary part of the ordinance. If our Lord has left us sacraments as means of union with Himself, in whose hands has He left them? To whom has He committed their administration? This is the question which the epistle raises; and now observe the way in which the Church answers this question in its choice of the gospel for the day. We ask—To whom has Christ entrusted His sacraments? The Church answers by giving us Christ's own words. She simply places before us the ordination of the apostles: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." This is the solemn and emphatic answer. It plainly teaches that the charge in question is committed to the apostles, and to those who inherit their ministry—that is, the bishops and clergy of the Church. And if we ask for any further confirmation of this, it is to be found in the ordination service, where these words to His

apostles are used by the bishop in the ordination of priests, thereby teaching us that the Church holds that the commission, in all its essentials, is permanent; that it has continued, and continues still, in full force at the present day.

4. Thus we are taught *positively* who they are to whom Christ has entrusted His sacraments. But it may still be asked—Is this commission exclusive? We may believe that the apostolic ministry as it exists in the Church is of Christ's appointment, but are we also bound to maintain that no other ministry is sanctioned by Him? It might indeed be observed that Christ's appointment where it exists, *must*, from the nature of the case, be exclusive; that if *He* has given a ministry to His Church, no other can have any claim to such a function. But now take the answer which our Church gives in the first lesson for this morning. Aaron was God's priest, and the succession to the office was conferred by divine appointment upon his family. Korah was a Levite, and so enjoyed a ministerial office; Dathan and Abiram belonged to a lay tribe; and these three, with a large and influential body of supporters, asserted an equal right with Aaron to the priesthood. They argued confidently that all the congregation were equally holy—equally acceptable to God; that it was nothing but priestcraft, as people

would call it now, and spiritual pride which led Aaron to set himself thus exclusively above the rest of the congregation, and claim the supreme right of ministering before God. On this occasion, however, God vindicated the authority of those whom He had appointed, and overwhelmed, by a swift and sudden judgment, the unhappy man who had rebelled against it. And now, do we ask why this particular passage of the Old Testament history has been introduced into to-day's service? Take it as supplying an answer to the question before us, and the reason is plain. Who are those who have received authority to act as the ministers of Christ? They are those who belong to that order which our Lord Himself has instituted, even as God had before ordained the Jewish priesthood. But is any other ministry lawful? Do we, as the Israelites did, resist the notion of an exclusive claim, and attribute corrupt motives to those who hold it? Mark the answer and the warning afforded by this solemn narrative. When God had appointed the Jewish succession, and others presumed to intrude upon it, He publicly determined the case in their instance for ever, by inflicting upon them a swift and signal punishment. And thus we are taught *negatively* by the selection of this passage, as well as *positively* in the Gospel, that our Lord has restricted

His commission to those who have received it in succession from the apostles, on whom He Himself conferred it at the first.

5. But one more question may still be asked. Although ordination bestows a divine commission, it is not pretended that it can change the heart. The apostolic descent is no safeguard against human corruption, and unworthy men may be real priests. But can we indeed be sure of receiving the gifts of Christ through the hands of the unworthy? Can bad men ever be the channels through which we receive His holiest blessings? It is a natural objection as well as a plausible one, and, singular to say, it has been felt and acted on both by the Church of Rome and among all classes of Protestant dissenters. In the former body the intention of the minister is held to be necessary to the validity of the sacrament; while among the latter, not only the character, but even the gifts of the teacher, are looked upon as essential to the exercise of the office. But what does our Church say? Is the fitness of the minister a necessary element in the validity of his ministrations? Do Christ's gifts vary or fail according to the hands through which they pass? To this we have a clear and complete answer in the first lesson for this evening's service —the commencement of the history of the pro-

phet Balaam,—a very remarkable example in every way. Balaam sets forth, as we read, a real prophet, yet at the same time under God's anger. He goes to act *for* God, while he was really *against* Him—to speak God's words in spite of the resistance to the divine will which he betrayed throughout his entire mission; and finally, he goes to die a rebel agent in the ranks of His enemies, after having been the instrument of delivering some of the clearest discoveries of the divine purposes—nay, one of the most signal prophecies of Christ's coming—contained in the Old Testament.

This is the answer which the evening lesson of to-day gives to our last question—an answer, too, identical with the statement of the twenty-sixth Article: "The effect of Christ's ordinance is [not] taken away by [the] wickedness [of the minister], nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith, and rightly, do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men." And indeed, though at first sight it may appear perplexing, this is the only safe and reasonable view of the subject, as well as the only one consistent with a true faith in our Lord's love and power. His gifts depend upon Himself, not on man. If He has appointed

the sacraments as means of His grace, and the ministry as instruments for dispensing it, what could be more dishonouring to Him than the supposition that the agent could invalidate His gifts? Surely such a notion would be tantamount to making the efficacy of the ordinance, whatever it be, depend upon man, not upon Christ; and those who entertain it must, however unconsciously, be trusting to the human instrument rather than to Him from whom alone all grace and strength flow. Nor is this, great as it is, the only evil in this view. If the character of the minister, as necessary to the gift dispensed, be taken into account at all, where is the line to be drawn? What becomes of faith in Christ's ordinance? The greatest guilt is not always the most open. Judas was undetected among the apostles. Bad men may wear an outward show of goodness, and deceive not only others, but even themselves. Thus the flock of Christ would be placed in the miserable position of having to judge those through whom they receive God's gifts; while after all they would, in many instances, be left in a state of uncertainty as to whether they had received anything at all—whether the character of the minister might not have been such as to neutralise God's gift altogether.

Let us then firmly and faithfully believe

that His sacraments depend upon His institution —upon Himself alone; that if we in faith receive what He has ordained, and through the channel which He has appointed, we may believe and embrace all that He has promised of the efficacy of these His divine gifts. Let us partake in faith, nothing doubting. Let us draw near to Him who, though unseen, assures us through these tokens which He Himself gives, of the reality of His presence with us. And let us also remember that in proportion to our privileges so is our accountability. If indeed the blessing of union with Him is assured to us with that fulness and certainty which are set forth in the services we have been considering, with what eagerness should we hasten to take advantage of it—what fruits should it produce in our lives! How heavy must be the condemnation of those who neglect to avail themselves of such blessed gifts, and of those who share them without profit—of those who turn away from proffered grace, and of those who receive the grace of God in vain!

XXI

ALL SAINTS

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."—EPH. ii. 19.

OF all the festivals in the year, with the exception of those which are dedicated especially to our Lord or to the mysteries of the Faith, to-day is the most joyful, and the most attractive, and the most consoling. To us it brings the additional claim that it is the festival of our own Church—its dedication day, reminding us of the many blessings God has vouchsafed to us in this place,—the prayers, the sacraments, the help, the comfort, the supply of strength in hours of need; reminding us of all God's goodness to us in the past, and alas, too, of our own ingratitude. But in itself it is a day that ought to be dear to all Christian hearts, for who can live for any time in this world without having some near reason of their own to bind them to this day, and make

them value it? To-day is All Saints' Day. On other days we have commemorated the individual saints of Scripture, evangelists, apostles, and martyrs, we have contemplated their lives, been instructed and encouraged by their example; but to-day gathers, as it were, all commemorations into one, and brings before us the whole vast company of those who have followed Christ from the beginning, and have attained their rest. It is not the Blessed Virgin or the apostles alone that we commemorate now—not St. Peter, not St. Paul, not those whose names are recorded in the Bible, but all who have ever lived from their time, at all times, in all parts of the Church,—saints of the East and saints of the West, saints of our own and of those divided from us here; young and old, known and unknown; those who came immediately after the apostles, those who brought the Gospel first to these shores, and those who have been gathered in since; Athanasius, who, under God, saved the Faith from shipwreck; Augustin, who gave theology to the West; Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed teacher of the East; Gregory, who moulded and bequeathed to us a liturgy, and christianised England a second time after it had been desolated by the heathen of the North. Here is our own St. Patrick, who may well be called an apostle of love; a captive

and a slave in his boyhood, then when set at liberty haunted nightly in his dreams by a vision of Irish children stretching to him their hands in supplication, and crying out, "Holy youth, help us!" till at length, his whole soul glowing with pity and love for the heathen who had been his masters, he conceived the great enterprise of winning them to Christ, came back alone and unaided to the land and the people from whom he had suffered, and gave Ireland the liberty of the Gospel in return for the chains with which she had once loaded him. Here is St. Brigid, a girl of royal blood, and whose name is now stamped upon the country, sought out for her beauty, yet forsaking the world and what it offered, and giving herself to Christ from her childhood. Here is St. Columba, the dove in name and the unsparing penitent, so full of love and so full of severity; who, in those fierce days, having been the cause of bloodshed, condemned himself, as it is said, to a perpetual exile from his native land, settling with his companions on the desert rocks of Iona, and choosing that spot before others, in the rigour of his repentance, because he had first ascertained that from the highest point in the island Ireland could no longer be seen; and when, in after years, he was constrained to return to his own country for the purpose of being pres-

ent at a synod of bishops, he is said to have come with his face covered, that he might not even feast his eyes with one sight of the land he so dearly loved. And here too, of all times, all ranks, all ages, are many and many, unknown upon earth, but well known to God, and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. I will take but one instance: the story is a simple one, and the subject is one of Christ's little ones. The facts were related at the time by an eye-witness to the Bishop of Newfoundland. Seven years ago a great storm swept the shores of Labrador. It is a coast of iron, of tempest, and of ice, and there were many wrecks. A poor boy, a survivor from one of the lost ships, found three little children who had been washed ashore like himself. He took these children in charge, brought them to a sheltered spot, made a bed for them, covered them with his own clothes, and then watched them all night long while they slept. In the morning he went to seek their parents, whom he met at last searching in vain for their lost children. He directed them to the place where they were to be found, and then he went on himself to seek for food and shelter. When the parents had made sure of the safety of their children, and came back again to look for him who had saved them, they found him lying in the

snow, where he had sunk from hunger and hardship. He had gone to join the communion of saints.

These, and such as these, are the saints of whom we are reminded to-day, and the great truth which the day brings before us is that of our own personal connection with them—our interest in and close union with them. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints." The doctrine of to-day is the doctrine of the communion of saints. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints." The holy Catholic Church is the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost; its organisation is derived from our Lord's person, through His apostles, maintained by the threefold ministry and the sacraments which He ordained, and its members are the entire company of the baptized. Christ is the Head of the Church, from whom the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, and this is the body of which He is the Head. But in this visible body or Church of Christ the good and the bad are all mingled together; there are sound members and unsound, holy and unholy, saints and hypocrites. The outward aspect of the Church is disfigured and defiled with the sins of its own members, and that seamless gar-

ment of Christ is rent by schism and stained with error. Our faith in the Church now is tried, just as faith in our Lord's own person was tried when He was upon earth, by outward appearances. His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men ; and so is that of the Church, only in the Church it is sin —evil, moral or intellectual—which has so utterly darkened and disguised the outward aspect.

But there is an inward as well as an outward part, for the whole Church itself is a sacrament,—a visible body with an invisible life,—and that inward part is the communion of saints. "The King's daughter is all glorious within." There is a core of life, a company of the holy, God's secret ones, gathered out of all times, all nations, all climes, all ranks, ages, characters of man ; and these are knit and bound together in Christ, and with one another, however distant in time or divided in place or condition. These form that inward Church which the outward part encloses and conceals; and though unknown to each other here, that Spirit which has moulded, or is moulding, each and all to the one divine image and likeness of Christ, makes them to be one in Him who is their life, and in the deepest grounds of their being. All the true saints upon earth at this time—all the saints who have ever lived upon

earth, and who are now at rest with God,—all this vast and varied company are united in Christ by bonds which no created power can dissolve. This is the august, the ennobling, and joyful doctrine which to-day brings before us. This is the doctrine of the communion of saints.

The sentinel who watches at some solitary outpost, in darkness and in peril, derives confidence from the thought of the host to which he belongs, and still more from the thought of a peaceful home, of the hearts and the prayers that are with him in his danger. And so it is with us. We are no isolated units. We are not alone here. We have been brought into actual and living fellowship with that blessed company, part of which has accomplished its warfare and passed into the unseen world. But we still belong to them; they are ours and we are theirs. There is but a veil between us. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, though we cannot see them with our bodily eyes. They surround us and are spectators of every vicissitude of our struggle. They watch to welcome those who, one by one, having fought the good fight and finished their course, join them in that rest into which they have entered. "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumer-

able company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And now let us dwell for a few moments on some of the lessons which may be gathered for our own use from this doctrine of to-day.

1. And I suppose the first thought that will occur to us respecting the condition of the departed saints is the thought of their perfect safety. They are safe.—What a word is this, and how much it embraces! In this world, and to us as long as we are in this world, there is nothing safe; no safety for property, for friends, for affections, for body or mind; no safety, in a perfect sense, even for the soul. And therefore St. Peter says, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;" and St. Paul, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Be not high-minded, but fear;" and our Lord bids us watch and pray always, and says, "He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved." Our life is a probation, and probation implies the possibility of failure; it is a state of warfare, and till it ends there cannot be peace. We are beset by temptations, liable

to fall; we have to fight to the last against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Nay, our greatest danger lies in thinking that we are safe, and one of our worst temptations is to feel secure. I suppose there are seasons in the life of every man when even the strongest motives of fear are necessary to keep him from falling. But all this is over for the faithful departed. They are safe, and safe in the most complete and absolute sense of the word. There is no longer room for doubt or uncertainty about their condition; it is not merely prescience that they have now, it is knowledge; they are beyond faith, beyond hope, they are in possession. They have fought and conquered under the true Joshua; they have crossed Jordan and entered Canaan. Their warfare is accomplished, their iniquity is pardoned, they have received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins.

How great is their safety! They are safe from all outward danger: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." They are safe from temptation; the enemy shall not be able to do them violence;

the son of wickedness shall not hurt them. The world cannot any more mislead, nor the flesh entice, nor the devil molest them. They are safe from sin. Sin is dead in them at last. That dreadful corruption of nature from which they were never wholly free on earth is at an end; they fought against it in Christ's strength till it was wholly destroyed; and now they have no movement in their nature, and never will have any again, at variance with the will of God. Sin, that they have struggled with all their life, is a stranger to them for ever, and the will of God rules them supreme and wholly. In their death sin died in them, for he that is dead is freed from sin; and so they are secure. The sting of death is sin—"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. And not only are the departed saints safe, but they are happy. This in itself is a consequence of their deliverance from sin, which, as it divides us against God, against ourselves, and against others, is the true and proper cause of all our misery here. They are happy, therefore, in this longed-for and final emancipation; but still more are they happy because they love our Saviour, and now are with Him. They know that they are with Him by a present vision; they know that He has accepted them; they know

that they are His and He is theirs, and will be theirs always. In this they have found the end of all their faith, the consummation of their hopes, the crown of their victory. St. Paul says that to depart, for the true Christian, is to be with Christ; to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; and they are now in His presence—the presence of Him who was incarnate for their salvation; of Him who is perfect Man as well as perfect God; who manifests Himself to them now the very same person who lived here upon earth, who taught men from His own divine lips, who suffered for them upon the cross, died, rose, ascended for them, and now rules all things in heaven and earth by His power. In His presence they are; they can behold the hands that were wounded, the side that was pierced, the head that was crowned with thorns. They can say, without presumption and without fear, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And in this presence, too, they are all united together. The departed saints are with Christ, and they are also with each other. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are there; prophets, apostles, and martyrs; saints of the Old Testament and of the New,—the whole blessed company brought together, knit, and compacted in one; those who knew and loved each other upon earth, and now know and love each other

better than ever they could do here. There Jacob has found Joseph and his beloved Rachel; and Peter and James and John are there, and Paul and Barnabas; and there is the family of Bethany, Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. And there is Philemon, and Onesimus, and the many names of whom St. Paul has written; and Timothy has joined his mother Eunice, and St. Augustin is reunited to his mother, and St. Benedict is with that sister whose society he would allow himself to enjoy but once in a year, but spent with her his last night on earth, conversing on the joys of heaven. And there, too, are those who were separated or estranged, it may be, upon earth, by divisions in the Church, by differences of judgment or mutual misconceptions; and now they have met, and wonder how they ever could have misunderstood each other; they can scarcely believe that causes so slight should have produced alienation, and they grieve, if those happy souls can grieve, to think that it ever could be so. But they will misunderstand each other no more; for there is no error or discord or disharmony where they are. They dwell before Him who is light and love, and in His presence they are refreshed in the multitude of peace.

3. And once more: they are looking forward to that perfect consummation and bliss which

shall be theirs in the day of the resurrection. For the departed saints, though they are safe, though they are happy, though they are in the enjoyment of happiness incomparably beyond any of which we are capable in this life, are still waiting for something greater and better to come. And what is that greater thing for which they wait? They are waiting for the resurrection of their bodies. St. Paul calls it the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, and, the manifestation of the sons of God, and says that the whole creation is waiting for it; and in reference to it he says of himself, "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And St. John says, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear"—at the resurrection, that is—"we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Both the apostles are here speaking of the visible glory of Christians to be manifested or displayed openly before all creatures at the resurrection; when Christ their Lord will be openly manifested in His glory, and they will be made like Him by the transforming power of that manifested glory, even as here they are inwardly changed by an inward vision of it. It is for this that the saints—the whole body of the faithful

departed—are now waiting in the intermediate state. They are now separated from the bodies which they bore here, and they are waiting for the resurrection, when they will be united soul and body again, only made perfect after the likeness of Christ's body. They are waiting for this great consummation, and what delays it? They must wait till God has accomplished the number of His elect; till all the saved have been gathered one by one out of this present world; till all their ranks have been filled up without a single blank or omission; till not one place more is left to be filled; and then, when the whole number is completed, the kingdom of Christ will be revealed. This is what they are waiting for—till those who are now alive in this world have joined them. They are waiting and watching for us who are here—for you. There is a place among them for you—a place prepared and ready—and the saints are watching to receive you there.

But oh, are you prepared or preparing to occupy that place? will you reach it, or will you lose it? Judas had a place among the apostles—he had one of the twelve thrones—and he lost it, and another took his place, for the number must be filled; and so there is now a number of the elect—we know not what the number is, but we know that it too must be filled;

we know that the vacant seats are growing fewer and fewer as time flows on, and that if you forfeit your place, the place itself will be filled, but not by you. Our Lord says, "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown." *Thy* crown! What a dreadful thought, that your crown, your own crown, which you might secure if you chose, which you had only to hold fast, should be taken from you! But if you would keep your crown, if you would be prepared for your place among the saints, there is but one course open to you. To be admitted among the saints we must be like them, and to be like them we must follow their example. We read in the Acts that the first Christians at Jerusalem who had lands and possessions sold them and laid the price at the apostles' feet, and thousands of others in after times did the very same. I will give one instance. I have already alluded to St. Columba. And now I will tell you the sort of life he led before he settled in Iona. We have it probably in his own words.

Arran is a bare and rocky island lying in the Atlantic outside Galway Bay. Here St. Columba lived, and there is a poem extant which he wrote when leaving it in obedience to a divine call. It is a farewell, and it affords us a glimpse of his life. "Farewell," he begins, "a long fare-

well to thee, Aran of my heart. Paradise is with thee. The Garden of God is within the sound of thy bells. The angels love Aran. Each day an angel comes there to join in its services." And then he goes on to describe his "dear cell," and the holy, happy hours which he had spent there, "with the wind whistling through the loose stones, and the sea-spray hanging in his hair." Arran is nothing but a wild rock. It is strewn over with the ruins, which may still be seen, of the old cells, and at the best they could have been but such places as sheep would huddle under in a storm, and shiver in the cold and wet that would pierce through the chinks in the walls; yet this was the saint's "paradise—the home of his heart."

Now it is not for me to say that any one is now called to the same sort of life as he led—indeed, with the comforts in which people are brought up, I suppose that the strongest among us would not long survive the attempt to do so; but I do say that we all of us are called to imitate that reality of religion which led to it, and to look more closely to ourselves the more we are debarred by the circumstances of the times from employing such outward tests. If we are truly fellow-citizens of the saints, we must in some genuine way sympathise with

them in our lives and share their likeness in our souls. If we are ever to be with them, we must learn to love, and be made like them, in the one image of Him who is the King of Saints.

XXII

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

"I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man."—1 Cor. xi. 3.

We are hearing a good deal of late about the rights of women. The phrase is employed controversially, and for such a purpose it is conveniently ambiguous. "Women's rights" may mean either their acknowledged rights, or what are laid claim to as their rights, though the claim has not yet been established. As to the first: the rights of women have been hitherto determined, first, by Divine Providence, next by the Christian religion, and then by law; and are based upon their sex, their relation to man, and to society. So far as these rights, therefore, are concerned, no wish to disturb them has been expressed. Women can enjoy all their admitted rights without let or hindrance. There is no disposition on the part of men to intrude upon them. There are no men, however restless or

ambitious they may be, who wish to usurp the place of women, or deprive them of any of their existing offices or functions. Men, for instance, are, I believe, perfectly satisfied to leave, as at present, in female hands the care of their children, the management of their households, the ordering and regulation of all matters of a domestic nature; they do not attempt to compete with them in any of the employments or industrial pursuits which have been allotted to women; not to say that a man who was capable of even imitating them in anything of a personal kind, if such was to be found, would probably be hunted from society as a monster. Women's admitted rights are therefore perfectly safe, and so the watchword is here wholly inapplicable. This should be clearly understood. No actual right of woman is in the slightest danger. The cry is not in any sense a cry of alarm, or a defensive one; it is an aggressive cry. The object is to extend and increase, not to maintain or protect, the rights of women. It is a claim made upon what have been hitherto regarded as men's rights, and when made in this form the claim assumes the very point at issue.

Let us ask what woman's rights actually are, and what is their limit,—or, in other words, what is her place, for it is by this that her rights

are determined. And we should be very thankful in these restless days that God has enabled us to answer the question fully.

We learn what the place of woman is from two sources—from nature and from Revelation. Revelation tells us what it is expressly, and in words; and the providence of God confirms its teaching by the very nature which He has conferred on woman. Revelation has given the law, and God has provided for its observance by framing woman in accordance with the law, and surrounding her with circumstances that enforce compliance with it. An agitation like the present may be evanescent, or it may be protracted and mischievous, but eventually it must collapse, for nature will assert itself and triumph in the end.

We learn from the Bible that the place of woman was distinctly fixed on two occasions—first, at her creation, and afterwards at the fall. When Adam was placed in Eden God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. ii. 18). Thus woman was from the first made to be a help to man, not a rival or a competitor. This was her place. Nor was there any intimation then of subjection to man, or of her being inferior to him, for to be a help does not of itself imply inferiority. Again, when God brought her to him, Adam said,

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," and he named her accordingly, as being taken out of man (verse 23). Here then there was a perfect oneness of nature; and a subordination indeed, but not of inferiority, only of time and order. She was after man—as St. Paul says, "Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. ii. 13)—but not beneath him. Such was their state in Paradise. Whether, if they had not fallen, woman would ever have been actually subject to man or not, we cannot tell, and our knowledge of their unfallen condition is so limited to the facts of Scripture, and these are so scanty, that we cannot conjecture; all our positive information is contained in these two passages, from which we learn that woman was made to be man's help, and that he recognised her as formed from and as being one with himself.

After the fall there was a great change. Woman was made to be a help; she became a tempter. Adam was not deceived, Eve was; and being deceived, was in the transgression, and brought sin into the world; and God pronounced upon her the sentence, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband"—or, as in the margin, subject to thy husband—"and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii. 16). Now she was no longer to be merely a help, and, as it would seem, without

inequality ; she was to be a help under subjection. Adam, the representative of man, was to rule ; and Eve, the representative of woman, was to be ruled. This was the second condition in which woman was placed, added to and qualifying the former. It was the result of the fall ; it has continued ever since, and is her condition now ; and it is confirmed by the Christian dispensation. Accordingly St. Paul says in the text, "The head of every man is Christ ; and the head of the woman is the man." And again he says, "They"—women—"are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law"—referring to this passage in Genesis—(1 Cor. xiv. 34). And again, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. ii. 11, 12). Such passages teach plainly the doctrine of the subjection of woman to man, which is a penalty of the fall. Other passages, to which I do not refer, treat of the special relations of husband and wife ; but these relate to woman as such, and to her general position with regard to man. She is to learn with all subjection ; not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. And this, be it observed, is the rule under the Gospel. The law of Genesis is not repealed, altered, or modified

by Christianity. The Christian dispensation has indeed marvellously exalted the nature of woman in the person of the mother of our Lord. The Incarnation not only raised man, whose nature Christ took, but more signally woman, who bore Him; and the Gospel narrative contains many intimations of what He has done for her; but all the honours, powers, and graces conferred upon woman are within the sphere of her natural position, not beyond it; she is raised, not by being taken out of her place, but by being ennobled in it; not by being made an imperfect man, but by being made a perfect woman; and those restless and mistaken champions who would seek her elevation by a different method, could succeed only through the forfeiture of that great and special enrichment of her entire nature which would flow to her through Christian channels.

And what God has thus declared outwardly in revelation, He has confirmed inwardly by the very constitution of woman's nature. God has not made woman equal to or independent of man, and she could not achieve such independence for herself, even if she wished it. I need scarcely say that, physically and mentally, man is actually the strongest. I refer of course to the race, not to exceptional instances on one side or the other. In mind and body woman is more deli-

cately and finely organised, less fitted for laborious and continued work, less capable of severe and prolonged effort, than man. So that—as far as we can judge at all—if there were such a thing as a question of subjection, and she wished to strive for the mastery, she must eventually yield from mere lack of power; she is made for subjection, regarded merely as the condition of a weaker nature. But the truth is, she does not wish it. Her moral nature harmonises with the extent of her powers. She does not crave for what is beyond her strength. Woman herself does not *wish* to be independent. God has not only placed her under rule, but He has also implanted in her a desire to be ruled. The sentence pronounced at the fall is sealed within her in that very state of mind which answers to the law. In this she differs wholly from man. He seeks the exercise of authority; woman, on the contrary, accepts and submits to it—rests in it as natural, and wishes to be under rule. Dependence is the instinct of woman. I do not mean a mere helpless dependence, which is becoming neither in man nor woman—for how can she who is made to be a help be helpless herself?—but that natural and trustful dependence which relies on superior strength, and by reliance claims its support. And this leads me to notice, by the way, where

it is that the true strength of woman lies. I have spoken of her inability and indisposition to cope with man in actual struggle; of the law of subjection under which God has placed her both by nature and by His revealed Word. But it would be a mistake to suppose that she has no strength of her own, or that it is unequal to the demands upon it. If God has implanted in woman the instinct of dependence, He has implanted in man the instinct of protection. She looks to man for support and defence, and with all allowance for drawbacks, failures, even possible violations of the trust, does she not find it? Whatever is noblest in man's nature is evoked by the appeal, and the source from which the appeal comes is not the least beautiful element in the nature of woman. It is in this relation between conscious strength and confiding dependence that one great source of woman's power lies. He who refuses to acknowledge it ceases to be a man, and he who can abuse it is below the brute. If you take away her dependence you take away her real strength, and that by which alone she can, if I may so speak, encounter man. Thus God has made woman weak in her strength, because man is stronger, and strong in her weakness, for there man is weak. So that, if man and woman are unequal when standing upon the same level, they

are not so unequal when their respective powers are balanced one against the other—when woman uses her feminine strength, and man, in obedience to the better instincts of his nature, submits to it.

Such being woman's place and nature, God has assigned to her rights in strict accordance with it. He has not left her to a vain struggle for supremacy with man, in which she must inevitably succumb, and where defeat could only entail suffering. He has given her an ample sphere of her own for the exercise of her powers, distinct from that of man, and where she is as clearly supreme as he is in his. The whole field of domestic life, the whole work of ministration to suffering, falls properly under the charge of woman. Here it is that she rules without a rival and without dispute. Man cannot compete with her here if he wished, and he has no desire to do so. Here it is she fulfils the first end of her creation by being a true help to man. Without woman man would be comparatively helpless —a maimed being. So exact is the Bible account of the end for which she was made; not to do his work, not to be his representative or substitute, not to do anything which he could do better; but to do what he could not do, and so fill up the perfect form of human nature in all its

parts, to his help. Not man alone or woman alone—for a society composed exclusively of men would afford as defective a notion of human nature as a society composed exclusively of women (of course I speak generally, and do not touch the exceptional cases of religious communities)—but man and woman both, each fulfilling their own task in their own sphere without conflict or collision. And is not this a vast field for woman's exclusive sway? Is it not wide enough to give full scope and exercise to all her powers? Is it not as noble in its way, is it not as important—nay, in some respects may I not say is it not more important—than any work of man? Take that one great department of domestic life, with all its awful possibilities of good and evil, of happiness and misery, of greatness and ruin. Who has in reality the true control of it? Who is it that has taught us to use the word Home itself—from whom did we learn its meaning experimentally in language whose impression can never be obliterated? Who is it that can make a home? Not man; he can mar it; he may improve, adorn it in some degree, and support it; he cannot make it. We hand over the idea and the thing to woman. It is her place, her kingdom, and blind and misguided is she if she forgets this. Whatever power, amounting

sometimes to fascination, this idea exercises over man,—dwelling in him when others have departed, haunting him in the night watches, in distant lands, in wildernesses, in forests, on the ocean, bringing back the feelings of childhood in the freshness of yesterday, sometimes redeeming him by its memories,—is all due to woman. She is the mistress, the presiding power that makes it to be what it is. It is a mother, or wife, or sister, some woman that will be found to be the light and life of the home itself. It is around woman that all home revolves, and without her the very notion would perish from the mind of man.

Who again has, I may say, the destiny of each generation as it is born in her hands? We know that the foundations of the character are laid from the first, and in the earliest childhood; that the child is father of the man; that those who have the control, the teaching, the management of the children of the day are moulding the generation that is coming; that you women, mothers and elder sisters, are now, by what you say and do, by your own living example above all, whatever it may be, actually forming the minds of the men and women that are to follow you. What a tremendous responsibility! But what a great and noble work, if you constantly think of it, and try, in the fear of God and

with His help, to fulfil it! And is it not enough for women to have the very making and moulding of the characters of an entire generation? is not this a task sufficiently grand, sufficiently ample, for all their powers, if they could give them? Has man in all his works, in the whole range of his pursuits and his employments, any work that, for importance, for responsibility, for variety, for extent, for pregnancy of consequence, for bearing on the destiny of our nature and our world,—any work that can compete, nay, I may say compare, with this work of woman? For it is her work—the work of home, with all its hourly influences and teachings. Nay, more—On whom are the present generation of men themselves at this moment mainly dependent for their welfare and happiness? Who can make their home bright by cheerfulness, good-humour, order, skill, and neatness; or miserable by indolence, slovenliness, and discontent? Who has this great power of melting and comforting a tired or troubled or mortified or careworn man by the steady sunshine of a smile, or making his bitter cup tenfold bitterer by ill-humour or contradiction? Who can make the poorest home almost an image of Eden, or the most gorgeous palace an abode of misery—who, I say, possesses this marvellous power but woman?

And even this is not all. Much as it is, it is but of little value, for it relates only to the present time, to the destinies of this short-lived world, and to man's fleeting happiness while an inhabitant of it. Much as it is to stamp the first notions and control the first training of the human race, to have the first harvest of their affections, and win their first and best love; to hold the key of men's earthly homes and their hearts, and, as regards the present life, to fill them with light or darkness; much as this is, it is nothing to the field of power open to and ruled by woman as regards the future —to her influence, not in regard to things of sense, but over souls. It is women who have first access to the souls of the young fresh from the font, glittering with the light of sacramental dew. It is from women that the first lessons of religion come, if they ever come at all; and it is from women it often and finally makes its way into the hardened heart of man. Yes, in the prayers first taught at a mother's knee all the best learning of a life has been often acquired, and by a mother's own unflagging prayers the greatest blessings for the soul have been won. Who brought St. Augustin to God? who converted his father? It was St. Monica. She saved the soul of her husband, and she made her son a saint, and gave the Western Church the greatest

of its teachers, and one to whom we owe more than to any other uninspired writer. This was the work of a woman, done in the privacy of domestic life, and unknown to the world till the world had reaped the fruit. And how many kindred works has she wrought in silence within the same sphere? Is it not a great work to tame a savage, and to turn a brute into an angel? This has been accomplished. We are beginning to understand that even the brute animal is best tamed by gentleness, because it is true strength. The gentle and patient may suffer indeed, but they must conquer at last.

The other branch of work in which woman is man's help, and which is her proper and, I may say, exclusive sphere, is the work of ministration —the personal tending and relief of human suffering in all its forms. And can there be a nobler or a more necessary work than this? Of its dignity it is enough to say that it is Christ's work—that work which God Incarnate described as His own. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Nothing can be added to this. It is the highest of all earthly works, as most like His. Those who serve others in such ministrations are nearest to Christ. Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. And this is woman's work. Even while our Lord

was upon earth we find her drawing near to Him to learn the lesson. The women that followed Him from Galilee and ministered to Him of their substance; she who washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair; she who anointed Him at Bethany; the women who stood near His cross; the women who brought sweet spices and fine linen for His burial; the women who watched at His sepulchre, were types and teachers of the mission of their sex. And is it not important and wide enough to employ all their energies? It is as wide as the world, for the world is full of suffering. No age, no rank, no condition of life is secure from it; we must all suffer in our own time, more or less; and what work can be more important than in any measure to diminish or relieve this vast burden which weighs on all humanity? And it is the work of woman. Man is not fitted for it. He has not the necessary gifts and powers, and is clumsy, bewildered, and useless for those offices in which woman shines. She cannot stand beside him in battle, but she can follow him to the field and tend his wounds. She cannot share with him in the rough work of life, mental or bodily, but she can smooth his pillow, and minister to his helplessness when he sinks exhausted by the struggle. It is her true and congenial task; she was made

for it, by her sympathy, her tact, her delicacy, her patience, and that gentle and soothing firmness, which all are as the oil and wine poured into the traveller's wounds—a balm alike for sorrow and suffering. How little friendly to woman or to man either are those who would rob her of these by turning her abroad into the open world of hard competition, where these finer gifts, the grace, the beauty, and the strength of her nature, would be tarnished or trampled in the dust!

I have touched on these two branches of woman's work — her work at home, and her work out of doors — and between them they open a vast field for the exercise of her powers, as well as provide for both classes—the married and the single. Here then are her rights; here she has no rival, and may bear undisputed sway. And till these branches of woman's service are fully supplied, those who would divert her energies into any other channel have not even the excuse of lack of employment to urge. And are they really supplied? Can it be said, for instance, that women with families to look after, in all ranks, or in any rank of life, are as a body at this time doing their domestic work at home as it ought to be done? Do mothers, when the family is small, and mothers and elder daughters, where the family is large, as a rule devote them-

selves to this great and all-important work of the teaching and training of the children? Or do they not often compound for it by employing servants and consigning children to paid assistants where they can afford it? What is the custom? Is it that mothers should do all, or much, or little, or nothing, if they can help it, for their own children? To begin at the beginning: Do women, in our modern society, treat their infants as if they were their own, and as God intends they should? or do they hand them over from the hour of their birth to be nourished and cared for by strangers —transferring the rights of maternity to a hireling? What is the place of the little child as it begins to grow—at its mother's knee, learning about God and duty, or in the nursery, from which it is brought at stated intervals formally to be looked at or toyed with (like a plaything, not a soul), and where it is sent back again to live? How many mothers are there who do not teach their children anything, not even their prayers; who spend their time in a round of frivolity or amusement, in visits of ceremony, or, worse, in idle gossip, tattling, or scandal; initiating their grown daughters into the same life —a life of which dress, pleasure, and rivalry are the business, and superficial accomplishments the ghastly ornament, but where the real, daily, hourly

womanly duties of home are neglected or done by deputy. And so with out-of-door work too. Are not the poor, the sick, the suffering crying out on all sides for help? Is not the harvest plenteous enough if there were hands to reap it? Look at the wild children roving about our streets, and growing up to avenge themselves by preying upon a society that neglects them; look at the lanes and alleys of this city with their squalid abodes; look at the workhouses, where human beings are herded together to spend a life without occupation or aim; look at the streets by night, ay, and by day, where rampant vice is allowed to flaunt itself openly before the eyes of all,—look, I say, at this huge mass of want and woe, of sin and suffering, and then say whether it is not worse than futile to seek new fields of enterprise for woman when these fields at her very door are waste, or rank and poisonous, for want of that cultivation which God has made her to bestow?

What I have said on this head applies of course to the independent classes, and to such women belonging to them as have no domestic duties to claim their services. Home duties come first, and let no one suppose that they have any right to go abroad for work as long as even a single home duty remains unfulfilled. But there is no reason indeed why the work of ministration

for which woman is specially gifted should be confined to one class in society, instead of being shared by all. We have been lately reminded that there are in the population of Great Britain 900,000 women in excess of men. This does not mean that all these women have to earn their own bread. Many of them, no doubt, are in easy circumstances, but many more must work in order to live. And why should not some of these be employed in the works of which I have been speaking? In such a case, if the work is to be coped with at all effectually, there must be organisation, of which, however, I cannot now speak. But why should not bands of women be organised and go forth amid the mass of suffering with which the battlefield of life is strewn, dispensing their healing ministrations to those who now lie helpless and perishing?

In what I have said my object has been to show you, of course only in a general way, what woman's true place is, and what are the rights that belong to it. She is man's help, and under authority to him. But though under authority, she is mistress of home, and she is mistress in all those ministering offices for which man is dependent on her in all his seasons of weakness and suffering. Her place is home—her rights are at home, or home-like—and her character should in

every respect correspond. I cannot better conclude now than by setting before you the picture of the perfect woman, drawn by an unerring hand many ages ago, but well worth the study of women now. It is of a nobler form than that of the Roman matron, and yet like. Here is the description :—"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. . . . She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household. . . . She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. . . . Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. . . . Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

This was the Jewish matron in the book of Proverbs. But there is one still higher—the mother of our Lord. The Virgin and the mother; fulfilling in her own person the whole twofold life and destiny of woman. I will only say to you, my sisters—contemplate her; *think*

of her. And then think of the modern type of a woman—I will not attempt to describe it, but leave it to your own reflections—and judge which of the two is to be your own model in this life, and in your preparation for the life to come.

XXIII

MANY CALLED: FEW CHOSEN

"Many are called, but few are chosen."—MATT. xxii. 14.

I SHALL consider these words just as they stand in the text which I have read: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

1. And first we have to ask, *Who* are the many of whom our Lord here speaks? Now, without going into particular explanation, I may answer at once that this word "many" includes all Christians, without exception. If there are any persons upon earth of whom it can be said that they are the subjects of a divine call, there can be no doubt that those persons are the members of the Christian Church, and that not only collectively, but individually; that each Christian for himself and in his own person is one of the many who are called. And hence it follows that the words of the text apply to us; that we who are here—every one in this church—have actually shared the call. I am not telling you, observe,

of something future, something you are to expect or wait for. I am telling you of what is present; that you have each a personal concern in these words, which are spoken of you and belong to you. You are one of the many, and so have shared their call. Such is our present condition. We are of the number of those of whom our Lord says, "Many are called."

2. And *who* is it that has thus called us? This is the next question. It is no man, no angel, no creature—it is no other than God Himself. The God who made you and fashioned you, —He who first called you of nothing into being, now that He has given you being, a rational soul, and faculties and perceptions to recognise His voice, has called you again, and that in a way in which you can yourself hear and understand His voice. When He called you into existence, you could not hear that voice in your dawning consciousness—you could not realise your own life, still less Him who gave it. But now you can, if you will; if you do not stop your ears, or suffer them to be dulled and deafened by the voices of His creatures that resound on all sides of you; for they are loud, tumultuous, rude voices, and His is a still small voice; they are as the voices of storm and tempest, the roaring of the seas, and the pealing of the thunder; but His is

a soft and gentle voice—a voice that does not strive nor cry, and is not lifted up in the street, that comes down like the rain into a fleece of wool; a voice like the murmuring of the dove, and that speaks to the inner heart; and therefore to be heard only by those who will—as all can—listen for it with the ears of the heart. This is the voice of Him who calls you.

3. But *how* or when is it that God has called us? This is the next question; and I answer—God has called us all in many ways and at various times. First, He has called us by His *providence*. And this surely is a very distinct and audible call, if we only give heed to it. For consider—Why were you born in a Christian country and of Christian parents, and not among heathens who worship the work of their hands, the creature of their own corrupt imaginations? Why did God place you, when you could not choose for yourself, before you were even able to ask Him, among those to whom He has vouchsafed to give the knowledge of Himself, the only true God, as He is manifested in Christ, through the blessed revelation of the Gospel? Why did He call you into His Church, provide you with instruction, give you so many opportunities of hearing His Word, knowing His will, being taught how to serve Him, to live in His favour here and live for ever here-

after? Why did He thus mark you out, as it were, separate, signalise, and so marvellously distinguish you from millions of your fellow-creatures in other parts of the earth,—men like yourself, and with just as much claim as yours, on whom He has not bestowed such great and precious favours? What is the meaning—how are you to interpret this calling? Is it not as the very voice of God Himself, the voice of the Almighty, saying to you by His providence as in words, that He loves you,—saying, "Come to me; this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left"? And then, when you enter more minutely into the history and details of your own life up to the present hour,—God's providential dealings with you in yourself and by others; the people among whom He has placed you, the circumstances among which you were cast, how you were checked and warned, taught to shun one thing and allowed to choose another; your own peculiar temptations, trials, blessings, dangers, and deliverances—all, in fact, that makes up the wonderful history of one human being, shows what they might have been and what they are,—what, I say, sounds through the whole of it, from the first remembered moment of being to this present hour, but one prolonged voice of God in His providence calling you to Himself—say-

ing to you, "Hear and your soul shall live;" calling you to listen and be led by Him, your Maker, your Father, and learn what He Himself, in the language of His manifold and all-wise dealings with you, would teach you for your good.

4. But this is an outward calling and a voice from without, though it speaks so distinctly to what is within; and God has called even more clearly and intimately, for He has called you inwardly by His *grace*. Consider this greater and closer call. God has really called you yourself by His grace. What does this mean? We say in the Catechism that in baptism we were made children of grace. We say this; but have we thought—have we tried to sound the depths of this most wonderful of all facts as regards ourselves? Have we tried to comprehend—to stand apart, as it were, and contemplate ourselves in the light of this one absorbing truth—God has called me to be His son? To penetrate thoroughly, to develop all that lies within, would be indeed a work impossible to human powers, for it would be to relate the history of a soul redeemed and saved, beginning with its new birth, and continued through eternity; but have you really tried, according to the measure of our weak powers, to catch at all the meaning of this great call of God's

grace? God has made us His children. You were not born a child of God; you did not make yourself His child and you could not, by any effort of your own, nor could any other creature. It is His work wholly; and He did it at a time which seems chosen expressly to show man's impotence, and bar his claim to any share in the work. He made you His child in your infancy, before you could choose for yourself, before you knew Him at all or could know Him, so that with your first waking thoughts might also come the awaking of the blessed knowledge of whose child you were. He called you by His grace in your baptism, anticipating the ruin wrought in your nature by the fall, meeting the disease at its source with the remedy, and pouring the oil and wine into the soul while its wounds were still fresh. He gave you this grace before sin had stirred within, or temptation assailed you from without, thus enabling you to begin the struggle with the pledge of success. God made you His child before you knew any parent, giving you by His Spirit privilege and power that your first cries to Him might be those of a child to its Father; for what says the apostle: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Have you, I say, tried

to realise this, that God has done for you what no one else but He could do—He has made you His son; and now what is His call to you but this, to believe that you are His son, and to live as one who is His son—to live like what you are, and not to disgrace your birth? And this is what He is doing ceaselessly with us Christians. For the first great call of baptism is diffused, and echoes through all the calls of after life, whether stronger or weaker; growing with a sweet familiarity of recognition in those who listen, and pleading to the very last with the sinful and rebellious. There is not one remonstrance of conscience, no pleading within, no warning check, no reproach, no calm content in the issue of a successful struggle against ourselves, the world, or man, that is not in the case of a Christian the result of that grace, the voice of God speaking within, to rebuke or to console, to cast down or to raise up; to tell us of our own native helplessness, or assure us of His strength.

5. And what shall I say of His call to us in the other sacrament, the subject of so many prophecies and promises, foreshadowings and parables; the feast of fat things which He has spread for all nations in His Church,—in which Wisdom, that is, Christ Himself, openly calls you to eat and drink at His table,—where He drinks

anew of the fruit of the vine with His disciples? What shall I say of this greatest and most marvellous of all His calls to us here, where our Incarnate Lord invites us to eat with Him, nay, where He Himself comes to feed us with His most blessed body and blood,—to be Himself our spiritual food and sustenance? To this He has called you likewise. The call is to all Christians; to each of you in your own persons. You are one of the many who have been bidden to this great supper; to whom wisdom crieth—"Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

6. But God's calls to us do not end even here, though they might do so, for how manifold, various, and constraining are those on which I have touched! He not only calls us by His providence, by His secret grace, by visible sacraments that work invisibly; but He goes farther still; He even calls us by human words, by the familiar sound of man's voice, and the intelligible utterances of our own speech and language. God has called you by His Word. For what else is the Bible but the very word of God, the voice of the Almighty, no longer to be distinguished in the operations of Providence, or blending mysteriously with our own thoughts, or heard from behind the veil of sacramental symbols, but actually speaking to us

in familiar accents, the same words which ourselves use in our intercourse with one another? Think of this. When you read or hear the Bible, you are listening to God's own words, and He Himself is then calling you; sometimes speaking to you personally, as if there was no one else in the world but yourself, as if you were quite alone with God, as when He says, "My son, give me thine heart;" or when our Lord says, "I stand at the door and knock;" and again—"Come unto me,"—and, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" sometimes patiently and graciously explaining to you His providences, as when He says, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" sometimes encouraging you to pray to Him and promising His grace, as when our Lord says, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" sometimes setting before you in a single sentence the entire rule of a Christian life,—as a sudden gleam of sunshine lights up a whole landscape, revealing all its details as if by magic,—as in our Lord's words: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "If any

man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." But at all times it is God who speaks to you from the Bible, and that directly. Whatever the subject may be, God calls us from His Word, as He called Samuel audibly, as our Lord when He was upon earth called His apostles one by one to Him.

7. And once more: God calls us by the voice of living men. On whose behalf is it that we who do not differ from you, who are no better than you are, take upon us to speak to you, and who has given us authority to do so? We speak to you on God's behalf, and because He has sent us, otherwise we should have no more right to speak than you would have yourselves. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But where God has given the commission, then—"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." So then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. When you hear us, therefore, you have a call from God then and there expressly sent to you and delivered by living lips. There is no room left for doubt as to the applicability of the call; it is immediate,

personal, individual; brought by a special commissioned messenger, delivered to yourself. Christ has sent us to you, one by one, and you know and feel that He has. Your coming to church and placing yourself in the position of a hearer is an acknowledgment on your own part that He has. Christ has sent me in His name to you, and you, and you; and by His authority I call upon you now, at this moment,—rather by my voice He your Lord and Saviour calls you; and what more could you ask in evidence of your calling? Here, at this very time and in this place, you have a messenger from your Divine Lord, bearing His words to you; and will you not listen, will you not hearken and obey, will you not lift up your heart now to Him who sends the call and say: "Lord, open my ears that I be not rebellious; open mine eyes that I may see the wonderful things of Thy law; open my heart that I may embrace and feed upon Thy words sweeter to the hungry soul than honey and the honeycomb"?

8. And to *what* does God call us? This is the most important question of all, for on it turns the whole value of our calling, its success or its failure. Attend then to the answer. "Many are called, but few are chosen"—to what are they called? They are called that they may *be*

chosen. God calls the many,—He calls us all, that we may finally be of the number of His chosen ones, His elect, His own. This is what you are called to. God has called you in all these ways of which I have spoken, by His providence in all the circumstances of your life from your birth, by His grace which began in baptism, and has been continued in so many ways since, by His own written Word, by the voice of His ministers, that you, such as you are, and such as you know yourself now to be, with all your sins and sorrows,—that you may be one of His own chosen people. This, I repeat, is what you are called to, and nothing short of it; nothing greater than this indeed—nothing could be greater,—but nothing less. That you may be His;—O transporting and dazzling prospect for a sinful man!—Christ's; one of His own; one whom He has finally chosen from the multitude of men to inherit His promises; one whom He has framed for Himself, moulded by His hand, tried in the furnace; one of His precious jewels,—"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

Such is the final end and purpose of your calling. Is it not wonderful? Is it not glorious? Is there anything you would for one moment think of exchanging it for, or of comparing with

it? Does it leave anything conceivable to be desired beyond or in addition to it? Does not your heart glow and burn within you to think that the Almighty God, the Maker of heaven and earth, should, through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, have made you, a creature of clay, a worm of the dust, partaker of such a calling as this is? Here is a calling which the ambition of angel or archangel might tremble to appropriate, and it is yours from your birth, nay, reiteratedly yours, through His Church, through His Word, by His ministry, by my voice up to this very moment. Nor does the issue depend upon yourself alone, or upon your own unaided powers. He who has called you that you may be chosen, has given and gives you power to obey the call. His grace is sufficient; His strength is made perfect in weakness. Nay, He has done more even than this; for in calling you has He not actually chosen you already? For what else is the call itself but a choice,—a choice of you from among all those who have not shared the call? He has chosen you in calling you, for He has chosen you to *be* called; and then He has called you in order that you may be one of those who are finally and for ever chosen.

9. And lastly, we find here an answer to the momentous question,—How is it that if many

are called by God, and called by Him that they may be chosen, it is nevertheless declared in the text that few, and not many are chosen? What is the reason of this,—many called to be chosen, and yet few chosen? What is the meaning of this apparent inconsistency between the design and the issue? The answer is obvious, and it is full of awful warning to every one of us. The cause of failure is not to be found in God; not in His love, not in His purpose, not in the help He gives. The provision on His part is abundant and complete. God has done everything that could be done for our salvation; He has done exceeding abundantly above that we could ever ask or think. In the number and multiplicity of His calls, in choosing us at all to be the subject of them, in the abundance of His grace ministered to us and flowing through so many appointed channels like the mystic olive-trees with their golden pipes, in the prophets, in the gift of his Word, a perpetual oracle, a light and a guide, in the voice of His Church and of His ministers,—He has done everything to make us His — everything that could be done or conceived, except one thing, and that is, *to force our wills.* He has not done this, and He will not do it. That we may be chosen, we must choose God. We have the power—the awful power of

choice. We can consent to the purpose of our calling, or we can frustrate it. This is the testimony of Scripture from first to last. "I call heaven and earth to record," says Moses, ". . . that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose* life." "*Choose* you this day," says Joshua, "whom you will serve." "Ye will not come to me," says Christ,—not, I will not; nor, ye cannot,—but, "ye *will* not come, that ye might have life." "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me;" and if you refuse to hear His voice and to follow Him, you refuse to be one of His sheep. He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son; and if we will not allow Him to conform us to that image, we reject our predestination. "How often," says our Lord of Jerusalem, "would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!*" And St. Peter says, "Make your calling and election"—both the one and the other—"sure." But how can we make them sure but by accepting and acting upon them? Listen then to God's calls, and obey them. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice"—and every day when you hear it—"harden not your hearts." Be on the watch for God's voice in all things. Watch against sin. Every act of sin is a refusal to hear God, and

may mar your election. Keep up a sense of His presence by prayer and meditation, and then you will be able to hear Him. Think of the glory and greatness of your election to encourage you. Those whose minds are set upon noble objects have a security in them against lower temptations. But what is the object before you? To be God's chosen, Christ's sheep; to give yourself to God, and to belong to Him both here and for ever.

XXIV

THE SOUL'S FALL AND RISING AGAIN

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."—PSALM cxix. 25.

WE can all of us sympathise in our way in this sad complaint of the Psalmist—"My soul cleaveth to the dust." Most sad, most pitiable, when we look at it closely and attempt to dwell upon it. It is the lamentation of the Psalmist regarding his own soul, or rather, it is the lamentation of the soul regarding itself,—"My soul cleaveth to the dust." But can I then separate my soul from myself, set it apart as something that only belongs to me, and contemplate its condition? What is this soul but my own soul; and what is my own soul but that which is mine more truly and intimately than aught else pertaining to my nature,—that which I could not lose without losing all—that, in a word, which is indeed my true and real self? And the great sadness of this complaint lies in the contrast

between the soul and the condition into which it is fallen—between the soul itself and the dust to which it cleaves. It is not as if he had said, "My body cleaveth to the dust;" though this also is sad, yet in a different way, for it reminds us of sin and its penalty in the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" but the dust is not the place of the soul. Whatever else we may feel about our souls, we all feel this. I do not say we always think it—well for us would it be if we did—but we feel it. The very notion of a human soul prostrate and lying in the dust has something overwhelmingly oppressive and stifling about it. It is even horrible to think of; but oh, how unutterably mournful to feel! What degradation! How vast a fall! The human soul is the greatest and most precious object in this whole world; judging by what God has done for it, we might perhaps even venture to say, in the whole creation. Whatever there is in us possessing life, whatever is capable of good, whatever can endure; these irrepressible aspirations after something—a rest, a home, a blessedness—which is not here; all belongs to the soul. All its faculties, powers, affections, its whole being, tend upwards, and therefore for the soul to cleave to the earth at all is to have its nature suffer violence and become inverted. And yet the

words go, if possible, further than this. It is not only of cleaving to the ground that the complaint is made. The earth has its use and beauty. It is green; it is fertile and productive. It has a certain life within it, and can sustain life. But it is of the dust the Psalmist speaks; and the dust is absolutely worthless; the very symbol of what is without weight, or value, or regard—an empty nothing. Think of anything precious, such as a jewel, or a coin like that which the woman in the parable lost, and swept her house to seek for—sought it in the sweepings of the dust; and then think of a soul thus prostrate, defiled, hidden; "My soul cleaveth to the dust."

The text consists of two parts: (1) a confession and a cry of anguish from the writer, feeling and owning the condition of his own soul; "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." And (2) a prayer of faith and hope to God for help and deliverance, or rather for what comprises both—for life; "Quicken thou me according to thy word"—according to what Thou hast said and promised.

1. And first we have this complaint and confession, for they go together: "My soul cleaveth to the dust." For why does David thus complain; what has brought his soul so low as this? Alas, my brethren, need we ask? It is sin that brought down David's soul to the dust,

and it is sin that brings down ours. God did not make us at the first for this. We never should have lain so low had it not been for sin. God made man in His own image—after His likeness; and if we had not forfeited that image, it is not in the dust that our souls would now lie. People sometimes seem to take comfort and encouragement from the thought they are not worse than others. Not worse! As if it would be any comfort to think that other men's souls lie,—that all men's souls have thus lain in the dust, if our own lies there now! What an utterly inadequate and erroneous notion of the nature and consequences of sin must that man have who can find any relief from the thought that others are in the same miserable condition that he is in himself! What deplorable infatuation to feel easier about our state when it is bad, because it happens to be the state not of a few but of multitudes! It is in a very different frame of mind that David speaks in the text. He confesses, while he laments, that his soul cleaves to the dust, because he knows that sin—that his own sin—has brought it there. He speaks with sorrow as well as with conviction, with shame as well as sorrow, with self-indignation as well as shame. It is the cry of the penitent, recognising his own fallen condition and the true and proper cause—acknowledging

it without explanation or excuse; throwing open his misery and helplessness to an all-seeing and all-pitying eye, without any plea beyond the laying bare of that misery. I have sinned against Heaven; behold I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? My soul cleaveth to the dust.

2. But what is the dust to which the soul cleaves; and what does this cleaving to the dust mean? The true home of the soul is nothing less than the ever blessed presence of God; and as the dust is the vilest and most worthless of all things on earth, so is the whole earth itself, with all it holds and all it can give, most light and worthless when compared with that home and country of the soul. The dust then is the earth,—the world in which we are living, which in regard to the soul is as dust; and the soul cleaves to the dust when, instead of rising upwards to its heavenly home, delighting to dwell there in thought and anticipation, seeking strength for the works, trials, and temptations of life, comfort for its sorrows, and support through all—instead of being thus sustained and kept above the world—it clings to the earth itself; makes its home here, forgetting and forfeiting its true home; buries itself in the thoughts, cares, and works of the world, is entangled in its snares and corruptions, wallows in the lusts of the flesh. It becomes akin to the

dust of the earth, and bears its marks. Dust defiles; so the soul is polluted, sensualised, made fleshly and base: dust smothers; so the soul is choked with the thorny cares of the earth: dust blinds; so the soul no longer discerns the way in which it should walk or sees the light of heaven.

There are two ways in which the soul may be said thus to cleave to the dust. One way is by action, the other by affection. These two indeed, more or less, go together—that is, when the soul cleaves actively to the earth, it is because its affections are earthly; and when the affections are earthly, so are the actions; but for convenience we may look at them separately.

How then does the soul cleave actively to the earth? Consider yourselves, you to whom I am now speaking. You all have a great deal to do upon this earth where you are now living. Those among you who are engaged in business of any kind, are all day long, for six days out of the seven, employed about nothing else but the business of this world—business that has its beginning and its end entirely upon earth; business that never of itself suggests to you a single thought above or beyond the present world. For six days in the week your time, or the best part of it, is, I suppose I may say, necessarily occupied with this same business of the world. And then, if

you have any time for recreation, whether it is by reading, or by the society of others, or by going to places of amusement; whatever the way may be, I suppose I am not wrong in saying that your recreation is mostly drawn from this earth—that is, you read books that relate entirely to this world in some shape or another; books of history or of literature, light or grave, but earthly. Or you go into society, where the conversation is about this world, its ways, its doings, its opinions, its politics, its news, its fashions; about this or that person in public or private life, what they did, or what they said, or what others said of them; in a word, about something belonging entirely to the present world; to the earth, in fact, and to the dust of the earth.

Am I exaggerating when I thus describe the life even of the busy part of this congregation, whatever their business or employment may be? These are your week-days; but Sunday? Yes, I will come to Sunday; and I will only say this now, that whatever a man's week-days are, I think his Sundays will be found in the main to be very like them. I do not think if a man's week-days are all occupied about the world, that his Sundays will be free from it. Here then are these six days in which you, the living being that you are before God, a mere passenger through

the world, and to leave it in so short a time—the longest life is a short time in eternity—are as completely bound up and buried, so far as the occupation of your time goes, in and with this present world, as if there were actually no other; for the business of this world does not take cognisance of or acknowledge any other. Perhaps you are necessarily so employed; I am not now saying whether it can or cannot be helped; only as matter of fact that so it is.

And now, what of your soul, throughout all those six days of the world's work? Where is your soul all the time? how is it occupied? what is it doing? what is it thinking of? These are *the* questions. Has your soul gone entirely with you in all you have been doing through the week; gone with you in transacting your business, gone with you in making your bargains, in your dealings with other people; in your social enjoyments, your amusements, your pleasures? Have you and your soul been perfectly in accord—gone and got on together in everything without dispute or divergence? has it never struggled, never resisted, never remonstrated, never complained; never risen out of all this turmoil and confusion and dust of the world, never taken wings like a dove and soared to the everlasting hills, or sought help and rest as it nestled in the Divine Presence?

Has your soul had any better thoughts, better occupations, better life than your bodily life all the week, or have both lives been identical? Then, if they have, if this earthly life of yours does really represent the life of your soul too, and it has no separate and better life of its own going on all through, these words express distinctly what is your own active experience,—"My soul cleaveth to the dust."

So much I may say as to active life. And now, again, as to affection—What of the soul? I said that the soul may cleave to the dust—not the dust to it, but a very different thing; it to the dust—in affection as well as in action; but I say now that it does so chiefly in affection. For observe the word used—"My soul *cleaveth;*" not is entangled, or borne down reluctantly, or overwhelmed, but *cleaveth* to the dust—that is, by choice. But how is it that the soul can cleave to anything? The body cleaves by actual contact and adherence; but the nature of the soul is spiritual; it cannot enfold, or grasp, or touch what it clings to as the body does. The soul cleaves with its affections; these are the instruments by which it embraces and holds fast the objects to which it attaches itself. When the soul is said to cleave to the dust, it means that the soul cleaves with its affections, its love and

longing, to the things of the dust, to the things of this world, which are all as the dust, now light and worthless as dust, and soon to be buried in the dust finally. It is not merely that the soul is passive and acquiesces in the pursuit of these things, as men sometimes do in employment for which they have no heart, but that the soul itself freely chooses them, desires, seeks, delights in them; takes to all these earthly objects and pursuits of which I have been speaking, and throws itself into them. Ask yourselves, ask your own hearts, is it not so? Where is not only your person, your mental and bodily powers, but where are your affections all the day? What is it that they cling to most closely? What is it that carries away your keenest interest, that you take pleasure in thinking of whenever you can; that you recur to when you are at leisure, that you dwell upon when you are alone, when you lie awake in your bed—in fact, that you have your heart in? What is it? Where is it? You love a great many things in this world; you are attached to your friends, you love your home, and those who belong to it. There can be no question or doubt about your love for all such things. Your soul cleaveth to them. But oh, do you love nothing more? Do you really, truly, heartily love nothing better than these things? "Simon, son of Jona,

lovest thou me more than these?" O my brother, I wait for a reply,—advise, and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me. When I have enumerated everything in this world that you have your heart in, have I exhausted the entire catalogue of your affections—have I come to an end? Is it so, my brother, is it so indeed? Have you no other home in your heart but this poor home of dust upon earth? Have you no Being that you love better than these frail, passing shadows—these creatures of the dust among whom you are now living? O what will be the end of this, when all these come to an end, and you yourself come to your end too; when you must leave them all for ever and ever, and go look for a home elsewhere—a home to stand you in stead when everything else fails, to receive you when they all throw you off a beggar for rest, upon eternity!

2. But there is hope too in these sad words when we look at the rest of the sentence—hope because there is prayer, and prayer is the last plank to the human soul. It is not to man, nor to any creature, nor within the emptiness of his own heart, that David thus complains, but to God Himself, in whom all help lies; and his complaint, as I said, is a confession, and it passes into a prayer. And here it is that we come to

the turning-point in the entire condition of the soul. It is to be found in this one thing. David was not satisfied, as so many, alas, are satisfied, that his soul should cleave to the dust. He did not choose or accept the condition. Neither was he querulous, nor morose, nor despairing; he did not say, "My soul cleaveth to the dust, and I cannot help it." No; he felt the utter misery of this state with too piercing and intense an anguish to acquiesce in it; and he believed in God as his Saviour and Deliverer, and to Him he cried out of the dust. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word."

And all may hinge upon this with ourselves now, if only we are not satisfied that our souls should cleave to the dust, if we truly grieve at our too great entanglement in everything belonging to the present world, if only we long with an insatiable longing to have our hearts emancipated from the thraldom of its ties and attachments. I do not say it is enough to desire deliverance, for many sigh for it day after day, but go no farther; but I say that there can be no deliverance without the desire, and that it is the very first step. And are there not those here who do feel the desire in earnest? You are busy in the world,

and you often grieve to find what a keen relish you take in its concerns; you see that you are like others in the everyday details of life; that you are eager in pursuing your own objects and interests; disappointed where you fail; easily mortified, or vexed, or put out; quickly elated and as soon depressed; ready to fall in with the opinions, judgments, conversation, gossip of the day. You see and feel all this, and you deplore, and are grieved and terrified to think how full of the world your own heart is. And then, on the other hand, how little of God or heaven is there! How easy it is to put good thoughts out of your head! How apt your mind is to wander in prayer, or religious thought, or reading! How often your attention is distracted in church! How cold you are in your devotions, and in your approach to the Holy Sacrament! You feel it all—this miserable, earthward clinging of the affections, and their deadness heavenward—and you mourn over it. You say, "I cannot raise my soul; I have no fervour; my heart is hard, dry, parched, like an unwatered ground; my soul cleaveth to the dust."

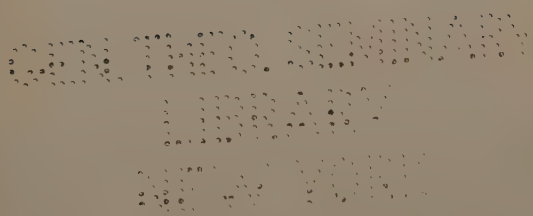
And it is true. We must not attempt to make ourselves appear better in our own eyes than we are. Samuel said to the Israelites, "Ye have done all this wickedness." He did not pal-

liate it, but he added, "Yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart;" so let it be with you. Let the profound sense of want make you cry the more for help. Persevere, persevere in seeking God in everything. Say, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." Feel it, but go on the more fervently with the prayer of faith, "Quicken me according to thy word." It is His own word of promise; and hath He said, and will He not do it?

What we want is life, and it is the very gift He came to give us: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." He came down to the earth, to the dust of the earth, to the dust of death, that He might quicken us who were dead and laid in the dust by sin. He has risen out of it that He might do so. Did you ever see a young bird when it first tries to lift itself from the ground, struggling, fluttering with its wings; failing, yet not ceasing? It has no strength, but it has the will, and the strength will come—the will is the pledge of strength. Your soul is like that bird. The bird struggles, it flutters, it beats the ground as if indignantly, it strikes the air with its wings, and at last it mounts upwards with a song of joy and exultation. So be it with your soul. Strive to rise, and in due time God will give you the

living strength. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

THE END



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